

**STATEMENT OF STEPHEN E. WHITESELL, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS,
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 854, A BILL
TO AUTHORIZE THE PEACE CORPS COMMEMORATIVE FOUNDATION
TO ESTABLISH A COMMEMORATIVE WORK IN THE DISTRICT OF
COLUMBIA AND ITS ENVIRONS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

OCTOBER 4, 2011

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 854, a bill to authorize the Peace Corps Commemorative Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and environs, and for other purposes.

The Department supports H.R. 854, which would authorize a memorial commemorating the formation of the Peace Corps and the ideals of world peace and friendship upon which the Peace Corps was founded. This proposal provides that no federal funds be used for establishing the memorial.

Although this proposal does not seek any exceptions to the Commemorative Works Act (CWA), it should be noted that this proposal to honor the ideals upon which the Peace Corps was founded does not fit the typical mold for commemoration. The concept of establishing a memorial to “ideals” is not explicitly described in the CWA. When testifying on H.R. 4195, a similar bill introduced in the 111th Congress, we identified our concerns that a bill such as this could set an unwelcome precedent for any and all future concepts identified only as “ideals,” resulting in an untenable influx of memorial proposals. However, there is precedent for such commemoration: specifically, the National Peace Garden, which Congress authorized in 1987, and the Memorial to Japanese American Patriotism in World War II, which was authorized in 1992.

Our support for this proposal is based upon our understanding that this memorial will recognize the establishment of the Peace Corps and the significance of the ideals it exemplifies, not the organization’s members. The CWA precludes a memorial to members of the Peace Corps as the commemoration of groups may not be authorized until after the 25th anniversary of the death of the last surviving member of a group.

The Department notes that H.R. 854 reflects suggestions made to strengthen the language in this proposal as recommended in our testimony on H.R. 4195 in the 111th Congress, and by the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission at its meeting on April 21, 2010. The National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission reviewed H.R. 854 on June 23, 2011, and expressed support for the concept of a memorial to the ideals of the Peace Corps, finding that the provisions of H.R. 854 connects the ideals to the exceptional aspects of American character that are exhibited in the ideals of the Peace Corps. We

share the Commission's support for the idea of commemorating volunteerism and international cooperation as worthy ideals and practice of the Peace Corps.

Finally, H.R. 854 provides that unspent funds raised for the construction of the memorial be provided to the National Park Foundation for deposit in an interest-bearing account as stated in 40 U.S.C. Section 8906(b)(3), as recommended in our testimony on H.R. on H.R. 4195 in the 111th Congress. We appreciate the inclusion of this provision, and would like to work with the committee on an additional technical amendment to the language.

That concludes my testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to respond to any questions from you and members of the committee

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN E. WHITESELL, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS, OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 1335, A BILL TO REVISE THE BOUNDARIES OF GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK TO INCLUDE THE GETTYSBURG TRAIN STATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

October 4, 2011

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 1335, a bill to add the historic Lincoln Train Station in the Borough of Gettysburg and 45 acres at the base of Big Round Top to Gettysburg National Military Park in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Department supports enactment of this legislation.

Gettysburg National Military Park protects major portions of the site of the largest battle waged during this nation's Civil War. Fought in the first three days of July 1863, the Battle of Gettysburg resulted in a victory for Union forces and successfully ended the second invasion of the North by Confederate forces commanded by General Robert E. Lee. Historians have referred to the battle as a major turning point in the war - the "High Water Mark of the Confederacy." It was also the Civil War's bloodiest single battle, resulting in over 51,000 soldiers killed, wounded, captured or missing.

The Soldiers' National Cemetery within the park was dedicated on November 19, 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln delivered his immortal Gettysburg Address. The cemetery contains more than 7,000 interments including over 3,500 from the Civil War. The park currently includes nearly 6,000 acres, with 26 miles of park roads and over 1,400 monuments, markers, and memorials.

Gettysburg's Lincoln Train Station was built in 1858 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The station served as a hospital during the Battle of Gettysburg, and the wounded and the dead were transported from Gettysburg through this station in the aftermath of battle. President Abraham Lincoln arrived at this station when he visited to give the Gettysburg Address.

Gettysburg National Military Park's 1999 General Management Plan called for expanding cooperative relationships and partnerships with the Borough of Gettysburg and other sites "to ensure that resources closely linked to the park, the battle, and the non-combatant civilian involvement in the battle and its aftermath are appropriately protected and used." In particular, the plan stated that the National Park Service would initiate "cooperation agreements with willing owners, and seek the assistance of the Borough of Gettysburg and other appropriate entities to preserve, operate and manage the Wills House and Lincoln Train Station."

The Borough of Gettysburg Interpretive Plan called for the Lincoln Train Station to be used as a downtown information and orientation center for visitors – where all park visitors would arrive after coming downtown – to receive information and orientation to downtown historic attractions, including the David Wills House. This is the house where Lincoln stayed the night before delivering the Gettysburg Address. The Interpretive Plan also called for rehabilitation of the Wills House, which was added to the park’s boundary through Public Law 106-290 in October 2000, and is now a historic house museum in the borough and an official site within Gettysburg National Military Park. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the David Wills House is operated by Main Street Gettysburg at no cost to the National Park Service.

The Lincoln Train Station is next to the downtown terminus of Freedom Transit, Gettysburg’s shuttle system, which started operations in July 2009 with a grant from the Federal Transit Administration in the Department of Transportation.

In 2006, the Borough of Gettysburg completed rehabilitation of the Lincoln Train Station with funds from a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania grant. Due to a lack of funds, however, the borough has been unable to operate a visitor information and orientation center there. Through formal vote of the Borough Council, the Borough of Gettysburg has asked the National Park Service to take over the ownership and operations of the train station. The anticipated acquisition cost for the completely rehabilitated train station is approximately \$772,000, subject to an appraisal by the federal government. Funding to acquire this land would be subject to the availability of appropriations and NPS priorities.

The park has a preliminary commitment from the Gettysburg Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB) to provide all staffing requirements for operations of an information and orientation center in the train station, thereby alleviating the park of staff costs. Anticipated operating costs for the train station that will be the responsibility of the NPS are limited to utility costs, the rest will be paid by the Gettysburg CVB. In the event that the Gettysburg CVB is unable to provide staffing and funding for operations, the NPS would seek another park partner to cover these costs and requirements.

This legislation would also add 45 acres near Big Round Top along Plum Run in Cumberland Township, Pennsylvania, to the boundary of the park. The 45-acre tract of land is adjacent to the Gettysburg National Military Park and is within the Battlefield Historic District. The land is at the southern base of Big Round Top at the southern end of the Gettysburg battlefield. There were cavalry skirmishers in this area during the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1863, but the real significance is environmental. The tract has critical wetlands and wildlife habitat related to Plum Run. Wayne and Susan Hill donated it to the Gettysburg Foundation in April 2009. The Gettysburg Foundation plans to donate fee title interest in the parcel to the National Park Service once it is within the park boundary. It abuts land already owned by the National Park Service.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have regarding the Department’s position on H.R. 1335.

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN E. WHITESELL, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS, COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 2563, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE A WALL OF REMEMBRANCE AS PART OF THE KOREAN WAR VETERANS MEMORIAL AND TO ALLOW CERTAIN PRIVATE CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUND THAT WALL OF REMEMBRANCE

OCTOBER 4, 2011

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 2563, a bill to authorize a Wall of Remembrance as part of the Korean War Veterans Memorial and to allow certain private contributions to fund that Wall of Remembrance.

The Department opposes H.R. 2563 because it would significantly alter the character of the existing Korean War Veterans Memorial in a manner inconsistent with the Commemorative Works Act.

H.R. 2563 proposes to amend Public Law 99-572 to expand upon the original purpose and design of the Korean War Veterans Memorial. The bill adds new subjects for commemoration, Korean armed forces and other Korean military personnel, and would authorize the display of information not now displayed at the memorial about members of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Korean Conflict. The bill would also enable the display of information about members of other-than-U.S. forces who served in the Korean Conflict.

The Korean War Veterans Memorial is located near the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, DC, in the Reserve, an area Congress has determined, in the Commemorative Works Act, that no new commemorative works shall be located. The Memorial commemorates the sacrifices of the 5.8 million Americans world-wide who served in the U.S. armed services during the three-year period of the Korean War. The Memorial also recognizes the participation of the 22 nations who served as United Nations contributors. During the Korean War's relatively short duration from June 25, 1950, to July 27, 1953, 54,246 Americans world-wide died. Of these, 8,200 are listed as missing in action or lost or buried at sea. In addition 103,284 were wounded during the conflict.

The Korean War Veterans Memorial itself is a completed work of civic art in this special landscape, the Reserve. The Memorial was designed, constructed and completed by its legislatively designated sponsor, the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) and the Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board. It was dedicated on July 27, 1995.

The Memorial's design, and each of its features down to its plantings, are symbolic. The Memorial is the culmination of years of work by the ABMC, and careful reviews, followed by revisions, and ultimately approvals by the National Park Service and other federal entities including the National Capital Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

This painstaking and public process began with the competition design, and resulted in the completed Memorial we know today. The Memorial should not now be changed to include the engraving of names of Americans who served in that conflict. The opportunity to mimic the design characteristics present at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was purposefully avoided when the design was requested during an open, international design competition.

The concept of engraving names at this Memorial was considered when the Memorial was being designed. The ABMC and the Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board with the Department's concurrence, advised against the incorporation of engraved names at the Memorial. Both agencies arrived at this decision upon reflection of years of experience with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. As the Vietnam Veterans Memorial experience showed, there is not always agreement on those names to be included and those names that are not, and this has led to public contention and controversy. Choosing some names and omitting others causes a place of solace to become a source of hurt. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial honors all who served in that conflict, but only the names of the 58,272 killed within the combat zone are engraved on the Wall. This meant that those killed by a fire on a Navy ship just outside the zone were not eligible to have their names engraved on the wall - a difficult message for their survivors to accept.

The ABMC and the Department felt the lessons learned at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial must not be ignored, that a different type of commemoration must occur at the Korean War Veterans Memorial, and that the Memorial should be representative in design and not include individual names. As a compromise to the Korean War veterans who wanted the names engraved, ABMC created the Korean War Honor Roll, which is an electronic registry of names. Visitors have access to this registry from the Internet or at the kiosks at the Memorial. A kiosk containing the Korean War Honor Roll stands at the west entrance of the Memorial. It is serviced by a National Park Service ranger, who provides assistance to visitors. The Honor Roll computer contains the names of all military personnel who lost their lives during the Korean War, including the individual's name, service, rank, service number, date of birth, hometown or county of entry into the service, cause of death, date of death and, if the information is furnished to ABMC, the serviceman's unit, awards, circumstances surrounding the death or missing in action and photograph. The ABMC also has the names of those missing engraved at the Courts of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial.

Moreover, we cannot ignore the practical effect of this legislation. Essentially, the Memorial wall would be a second Korean War Veterans Memorial, effectively thwarting the intent of the Commemorative Works Act to prohibit new memorials within the Reserve and would be an addition that would significantly alter the character of the existing Memorial.

We feel very strongly that the Korean War Veterans Memorial, like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, exists to recall the exemplary service and sacrifice of outstanding Americans, and this memorial has already been completed and it stands today. The Korean War Veterans Memorial is a place of honor and dignity and we should avoid any intrusions which will become a source of contention or controversy.

That concludes my prepared testimony on H.R. 2563, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.