

1 Mister Chairman and members of the Committee, good morning. I am Judith  
2 Young, the Chair of the Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation, and I  
3 thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

4  
5 I also want to thank the Committee for your work over the years to enhance the  
6 "American Experience" through the National Park System, our forests and public  
7 lands, and specifically through our national monuments.

8  
9 Through your Committee's legislative initiatives and dedicated work you permit the  
10 American people (both old and young, alike) to reflect, to remember, and to honor  
11 the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform and their families through some of  
12 the magnificent memorials and monuments here on the National Mall, and many  
13 other locations throughout this great country of ours.

14  
15 Today I am privileged to be able to speak with you in support of H.R. 1980, The  
16 Gold Star Mothers National Monument Act of 2011. I want to personally thank  
17 Representative Jon Runyon for introducing this important legislation and the bill's  
18 63 Co-Sponsors, including 7 members of the House Committee on Natural  
19 Resources (Bordallo, Denham, Flores, Garamendi, Johnson, Lamborn, Pallone).

20  
21 Throughout our history, the fighting spirit of the American Warrior has never been  
22 questioned. The men and women of our Armed Forces continue to display their  
23 valor in the finest traditions of the generations who have served since the  
24 Continental Army. We, the American people, continue to be blessed by their acts of  
25 bravery and selfless service.

26  
27 At the same time, the families of our military members also serve and sacrifice in  
28 their own personal way.

29  
30 The Gold Star tradition has been around for nearly a century as a reminder of their  
31 sacrifices. During World War I, flags were displayed in homes, businesses, schools  
32 and churches bearing a blue star representing each member of the family who was

33 serving in harm's way. If the service members gave their life, a gold star was  
34 stitched over the blue one. From this simple, but powerful, expression of love and  
35 devotion came the distinction of being a Gold Star Mother.

36

37 Being a Gold Star Mother is not a status that one pursues. Rather, it is a state of  
38 being that descends upon us as a result of having raised our children with the spirit  
39 and sense of duty for "service to country." With the knock on the door on that  
40 fateful day, our lives are forever changed. But as unwelcome as the distinction of  
41 being Gold Star Mother might be, we have chosen to transform our loss and grief  
42 into service to others. We believe that we can honor the legacy of our sons and  
43 daughters by serving others.

44

45 That brings me to the current legislation and our efforts to establish a national  
46 monument here in the National Capitol Region. The region is replete with  
47 monuments and memorials to the Warrior (and rightly so), but the sacrifices of the  
48 families go largely unrecognized --- except perhaps with a comment during a  
49 speech.

50

51 The purpose of the Gold Star Mothers National Monument is to honor the Mothers  
52 who know the grief of losing a son or daughter in the service of our country. It will  
53 also promote a bond of kinship and engage support for our Veterans who have  
54 stepped forward and answered the call to duty in defense of our nation. In large  
55 measure, by honoring the mothers it will recognize and honor the sacrifices of each  
56 family.

57

58 Over the years Gold Star Mothers have collectively invested millions of volunteer  
59 hours in support of our Warriors and their families, in personal service at our  
60 nation's Veterans hospitals, and to individual Veterans in their local communities. In  
61 serving this way, the Mothers have turned their loss into a positive force for others.  
62 Our Executive Director and the Sculptor of the monument, Andrew Chernack, has  
63 perhaps said it best: If you want to know quiet greatness, spend a little time in the  
64 presence of a Gold Star Mother.

65

66 We believe it only fitting and proper that through H.R. 1980 a national monument  
67 be established and authorized for placement here in the National Capitol Region.  
68 Our hope and desire is to see it placed near the Visitor's Center at Arlington  
69 National Cemetery. Although there may be other locations, Arlington is the national  
70 resting place of warriors and is emblematic of other national and hometown  
71 cemeteries across the country where our sons and daughters have eternal rest.  
72 Everyone laid to rest in Arlington had a mother who nurtured them, worried about  
73 them and prayed for them. We therefore believe it fitting that a monument to Gold  
74 Star Mothers should be placed nearby.

75

76 As I am sure the members of this Committee fully understand and appreciate, the  
77 significance of a monument or memorial is not only in the structure itself, but also  
78 in its placement. To provide the greatest honor, monuments need to be placed  
79 where they can be easily accessed and seen by the greatest number of people. To  
80 do otherwise will convey the impression --- rightly or wrongly --- that the purpose  
81 of the monument has less significance and standing than it otherwise would have if  
82 properly located.

83

84 I want to reinforce the provision of H.R. 1980 regarding expenses. All costs  
85 associated with the Gold Star Mothers National Monument will be borne through  
86 private funds raised through work of the Gold Star Mothers National Monument  
87 Foundation. No Federal funds are being requested or expected. Our fund raising  
88 efforts are already underway.

89

90 America's Gold Star Mothers proudly honor those who fought, those who died, and  
91 those who did not return from all prior wars and conflicts. It is only proper that we  
92 honor them with the Gold Star Mothers National Monument. I therefore urge your  
93 favorable consideration of H.R. 1980.

94

95 Again, I thank you for privilege of being able to speak with you today.