

STATEMENT OF JOHN PARSONS, ASSOCIATE REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR LANDS, RESOURCES, AND PLANNING, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS OF HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 282, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE PYRAMID OF REMEMBRANCE FOUNDATION TO ESTABLISH A MEMORIAL IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OR ITS ENVIRONS TO SOLDIERS WHO HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES DURING PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS, HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS, TRAINING, TERRORIST ATTACKS, OR COVERT OPERATIONS.

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 282, a bill sponsored by Representative LaTourette to authorize the Pyramid of Remembrance Foundation to establish a memorial in the District of Columbia or its environs to soldiers who have lost their lives during peacekeeping operations, humanitarian efforts, training, terrorist attacks, or covert operations.

The Department commends the idea of establishing such a memorial, which is particularly timely in light of the approach of the one-year anniversary of September 11. Lives lost by members of our Armed Services in events that are not formally declared wars are very much on the minds of all Americans these days. However, we recommend that the committee and sponsor work with the Department of Defense to develop an appropriate amendment that would authorize such a memorial to be established on military land rather than park land.

The National Capital Memorial Commission, which is responsible for advising Congress on legislation authorizing memorials within the District of Columbia and its environs under the Commemorative Works Act of 1986, considered the proposal contained in H.R. 282 in April, 2001. Section 3(b) of the Commemorative Works Act provides that a military commemorative work may only be authorized on park land to commemorate a war or similar major military conflict or to commemorate a branch of the Armed Services. The Commission therefore advised that the most appropriate placement for this memorial would be on a military property. The Department concurs with the Commission about this matter.

For that reason, we recommend that H.R. 282 be amended to authorize the Pyramid of Remembrance to be established on military property and to eliminate the bill's references to the Commemorative Works Act, which applies only to land in the Nation's Capital under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior and the General Services Administration. We also recommend that the bill's title be amended to use the same term for those who would be honored that is used in the text of the bill. The Administration would be pleased to work with the committee and Representative LaTourette to address our technical concerns.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks. I will be happy to answer any questions you or the other committee members have.