

H.R.2094
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Executive Director, Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission
Subcommittee on National Parks
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, for conducting this hearing today and providing the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 2094, a bill to provide for certain administrative and support services for the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission. I am the Executive Director of the Eisenhower Memorial Commission. Our small, dedicated staff has made excellent progress, and this legislation will enable us to be even more effective as we advance toward our goal of establishing a national memorial to President Eisenhower. H.R.2094 is a vitally necessary contribution to the Commission's ability to move forward expeditiously.

As you learned from the testimony individually submitted by Mr. Rocco C. Siciliano, our Chairman, and Congressman Dennis Moore, a Commissioner and member of our Executive Committee, the Eisenhower Memorial Commission secured final approval for a site for the National Eisenhower Memorial approximately one year ago. This superb four-acre site lies across from one of the most visited museums in the world, the National Air & Space Museum, and boasts a dramatic view of the Capitol along Maryland Avenue.

The site is surrounded by institutions with compelling connections to President Eisenhower. The site's closest neighbor is the U.S. Department of Education, one of the successors to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), which Eisenhower created in 1953. The Department of Health and Human Services also evolved from HEW and lies to the east. The same building houses the Voice of America Studios. Eisenhower moved the Voice of America to this location in 1954 and made it a key component of the United States Information Agency. To the west is the Federal Aviation Administration, which Eisenhower created as the Federal Aviation Agency in 1958. Finally, Eisenhower played a role in many of the innovations exhibited at the National Air & Space Museum. He created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and sent the nation's first satellite into space. He was the first to use both helicopters and jet aircraft for presidential transport, and the first president to have a pilot's license.

With site approval complete, the Commission is preparing to begin design. The Pre-Design Program currently in development will provide comprehensive information and guidance on the memorialization, which the designer will use as the basis for a unique, enduring memorial to Ike. As we transition into the design and construction phases, we need revised authority to manage appropriately the complex and time-sensitive processes inherent in this work. H.R. 2094 provides important adjustments to the Commission's enabling legislation.

Under the Commission's current authority, the Commission is not empowered to hire employees. Instead the Commission is now staffed by individually contracted consultants. To this point, our staff arrangement has enabled the Commission to progress, but this will not be optimal staffing for continuing development of the memorial. Currently, our only statutory authority lies with Rocco Siciliano, our Chairman, a combat-decorated World War II veteran who resides in California. All Commission actions, including purchasing office supplies, approving leave, and authorizing payment of invoices, must be sent to California for his approval. In addition, the laborious process of yearly staff contract renewals is not practical.

We have found ways to work within this administrative structure — particularly by using the highly professional support of General Services Administration's Agency Liaison Division, but our increasing activities over the past two years have demonstrated that it is inefficient. The complex issues involved in design and construction will require timely approvals from the Commission that will prove extremely difficult and inefficient to manage under the current organization of authority.

H.R.2094 will mitigate these inefficiencies. It will enable the Commission staff to convert to temporary federal employee status. It will give the Commission hiring authority historically afforded temporary commissions with similar staffing needs. These employees will be temporary, lasting only until the completion of the memorial and dissolution of the Commission.

H.R.2094 will also empower the Commission's Executive Architect, now on a contract extension, to manage the project with maximum efficacy by authorizing the Commission to appoint the architect as its agent. This will enable him to make the technical, time-sensitive decisions regarding the design and construction of the memorial. As the Commission's agent, the Executive Architect will also be authorized to represent the Commission as a voting member on design and construction selection panels, thereby improving coordination, communication, and decision-making for our twelve Commissioners. By converting the staff to federal employee status and making it possible to appoint the Executive Architect as an agent, the legislation will also cover the liability of Commission employees without compromising Commission oversight.

Other issues addressed in H.R.2094 include: formalizing and strengthening relationships with other federal agencies by enabling the Commission to call on various federal agencies for support in the memorialization of President Eisenhower; facilitating fundraising by making gifts to the Commission considered gifts to the United States and therefore tax deductible; and making legal provisions for the acceptance of volunteers on the staff.

The Commission and its staff are committed to our mission: to establish a national permanent memorial to Dwight D. Eisenhower in appreciation of his many contributions to the Nation and the world. President Eisenhower's legacy is steadily expanding in the national consciousness, and the public is increasingly aware of Eisenhower's powerful role in shaping the 21st century.

One of America's greatest generals, Eisenhower came to detest war and pursued peace throughout his life. He believed that World War II was a fight not for conquest, but for peace

with justice. Less than a year after the end of World War II, Ike stated “I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity.”

Following the war, Ike worked to ensure that the peace gained in World War II was not lost to post-war conflict abroad or to political and social unrest at home. He successfully diffused the Suez Canal crisis and enforced American integration by sending federal troops to Little Rock Central High School. His concern with the well-being of Americans and people everywhere was stated less than three months after becoming President, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

Eisenhower became convinced that international cooperation was the only way to ensure lasting peace. He said “I know that the American people share my belief that if a danger exists in the mind of one nation, it is a danger shared by all; and equally, that if hope exists in the mind of one nation, that hope should be shared by all.”

His integrity and his pursuit of peace gained President Eisenhower immense popularity in the U.S. and around the globe. He was viewed with respect and affection in Paris, London, Rome, Karachi, Kabul, and Istanbul. On a visit to New Delhi, India in 1959, the crowd that gathered to see Ike reached farther than the eye could see and cheered his words on mutual self-defense and liberty of action.

Ike became a worldwide symbol of American principles and values — an ambassador of peace and a champion of freedom. The National Eisenhower Memorial will honor the life and legacy of President Eisenhower and bring Americans together to celebrate themselves. A memorial to Ike will inspire visitors to achieve their own destiny through reliance on the values he embodied.

H.R.2094 will enable the Commission to progress rapidly and responsibly toward memorializing this great American. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of the proposed legislation.