

*Testimony of Rep. Jon Runyan
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1980,
“The Gold Star Mothers National Monument Act of 2011”
November 3, 2011*

Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva, thank you for holding this hearing today, for allowing me to testify, and for inviting Judith Young to testify. I would also like to personally thank Ms. Judith Young, the Chairwoman of the Gold Star Mothers National Monument Fund, for traveling from Moorestown, New Jersey to testify today and for the important work she does on behalf of the Gold Star Mothers.

H.R. 1980, The Gold Star Mothers National Monument Act of 2011, authorizes the Gold Star National Mothers Monument Foundation to build a Gold Star Mothers National Monument on federal lands within the District of Columbia as a unit of the National Parks System. This legislation only authorizes the use of federal lands in Washington, D.C., it does not authorize federal funding. All funds for construction are to be raised by the Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation. Let me be clear, all funds must be raised by the Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation; this will not cost the taxpayer a single dime.

During World War I, mothers of sons and daughters who served in the Armed Forces displayed flags bearing a blue star to represent pride in their sons or daughters and their hope that they would return home safely.

For more than 650,000 of these brave mothers, that hope was shattered, and their children never returned home. Afterwards many of them began displaying flags bearing gold stars to represent the sacrifice that their sons and daughters made in heroic service to our country. Over the years the gold star has come to represent a child who was killed while serving in the Armed Forces, during either war or peacetime.

In 1929 Congress passed a law authorizing the Federal Government to disburse funds for Gold Star Mothers and widows of those who were killed while serving in the Armed Forces during World War I. The funds authorized travel to the battlefields of Europe to visit the burial sites of their loved ones.

On June 23, 1936, Congress passed a Senate resolution which established the last Sunday in September as Gold Star Mother's Day.

Mr. Chairman, our Gold Star Mothers have sacrificed so much for their country, it is time that we give them something back. This legislation deserves full consideration by this Committee and Congress.