

Testimony by William E. Weber, Col – USA (Ret.)
Chairman, Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation, Inc.
on HR 318
Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulations
Committee on Natural Resources
US House of Representatives
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Mr. Chairman and members of the House Sub-Committee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulations:

I am Col William E. Weber, USA-Ret, Chairman of the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation, Inc. (KWVMFnd). I am here this date, 10 Jun 2014, to testify in support of HR-318. The KWVMFnd is a 501(C)(3) non-profit, tax exempt organization with the dual mission of ensuring there will always be the means available to guarantee appropriate maintenance of the Memorial and to ensure that a benchmark of the 20th Century, that is the Korean War and America's role, become a permanent part of our national consciousness. Our Board, chartered in Dec 1995, is composed in the main by those who were members of the Presidentially appointed Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board whose mission is as covered below.

HR 318, 113th Congress, was initiated by Congressman Ralph Hall, 4-TX, at our behest in an attempt to complete the Memorial's message as was intended by PL 99-572 which authorized the Memorial. As of 5 Jun 14, it had 53 co-sponsors. Further, it has the full support of the Korean War Veterans Association, Inc., a Congressional Chartered Veterans Organization of Korean War Veterans. In addition, it has the support of many of the Fraternal Unit Veterans Associations that have Korean War battle honors and, as well, family members of those Killed in Action.

PL 99-572, specifically details the original intent of the Congress. Such is not fulfilled by the current Korean War Veterans Memorial which, though a magnificent work of art, lacks both the specific and subliminal message the Congress specified. Controversy generated by reaction to the Vietnam Memorial and the resultant philosophy generated thereby, precluded the Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board from prevailing in the inclusion of naming of the Killed in Action in final design negotiations.

PL 99-572 called for the President to appoint a Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board (KWVMAB), whose mission, in part, was to, ***"(1)---recommending the site and selecting the design with the approval of the American Battle Monuments Commission---***" In effect this required selecting a design that would also be accepted and approved by the then National Capital Memorial Commission (NCMC), the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Fine Arts Commission (FAC).

When the specific language of PL 99-572 was being negotiated in order to ensure the Korean War Veterans Memorial gave appropriate recognition to the sacrifices of American Soldiers the phrase, ***"---to honor members of the United States Armed Forces who served in the Korean War, particularly those who were killed in action, are still missing in action, or were held as prisoners of war."***, became a dominant element of the law and a major element to the intended theme of the Memorial.

As part of a nationwide competition the KWVMAB reviewed over 500 submitted designs none of which fully met the requirements of PL 99-572, and thus, selected one that held the promise of appropriate modification. In keeping with PL 99-572 and the overwhelming wishes of the nation's Korean War

Veterans population, the KWVMAB studied means to meet the specific requirements of PL 99-572 (as underlined in the above), and satisfy the above named Commissions which held veto rights over any design. The KWVMAB was not able to resolve the primary requirement of PL 99-572 due to a seeming atmosphere of not wanting another 'Wall on the Mall'!

As a result, though a truly magnificent Memorial which clearly honors those who served in the Korean War, it does not appropriately honor those who sacrificed so much in the war! The visitor leaves with a sense of wonder at the magnificent artistry of the Memorial---but absent any sense of the full message it was intended to convey.

Recording the KIA names and WIA and POW by number for posterity on a glass Wall of Remembrance, will thereby personalize the numbers and focus on the enormity of their sacrifice (over 36,574 KIA (which includes the MIA), 103,134 WIA and 7245 POW. In terms of percentage of casualties, the Korean War was the bloodiest major foreign war in US history — 1 in 9 for Korea versus 1 in 12 in WWII and 1 in 17 in Vietnam.

As well, Korean soldiers known as KATUSA (Korean Augmentation to United States Army), who served alongside their U.S. comrades in U.S. units, and gave their lives deserve recognition. Over 9000+ KATUSA were KIA. Their sacrifice would have otherwise been American Soldiery whom they replaced. Their names are lost to history but their numbers deserve recognition for *their sacrifice would otherwise have been American lives*.

Given the state of the art at the time the Memorial design was finalized a Wall of Remembrance may have been an architectural barrier isolating the Memorial from the Mall and may have been incorrectly interpreted as copying or detracting from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Such thinking was specious given the totality of the theme of the Korean War Veterans Memorial.

Today an architectural 'barrier' is not a bar to a Wall, for a Glass Wall allows the Memorial to be integral to the Mall while still giving it a sense of closure and giving full meaning to the intended purpose of the Memorial. Contrary to the present pattern of visitation, the Wall will induce visitors to encircle the entire Memorial as opposed to current visitation habits which encourage encircling only the line of sculptures.

As to why the language in HR 318 is so specific, it is necessary to ensure that the Wall presents the absolute versus just the subliminal message that now exists and is too subtle to be understood. This is the purpose of any War Memorial! If visitation to a Memorial requires that visitors must have a brochure to gain full appreciation for the 'why' and 'what' of the Memorial, it fails in its purpose!

The Korean War remains "The Forgotten War" in the history of our nation. Mindful that this war was a benchmark of the 20th Century and notwithstanding the magnificence of the Memorial, it is inappropriate that the extent of our Soldiery's sacrifice remains unknown and that their sacrifice gave birth to the catalyst that generated the downfall of the USSR's goal to dominate the world.

Enactment of HR 318 will give remedy to the missing link in the Memorial and give honored and deserved recognition to a generation of American Soldiery who have been Forgotten! Just as surely as we fought WWII to save the world FOR DEMOCRACY so too, did we fight the Korean War to save the world FROM communism! The cost of that battle in terms of the sacrifice by American soldiery is a relative unknown in the American psyche and history!

Bureaucratic objection to adding the Wall of Remembrance to the Memorial seems fixated on the premise that once a Memorial is dedicated it is exempt from any modification or addition. Clearly, precedents exist which negate that premise!

The theme of the Korean War Veterans Memorial is that 'FREEDOM IS NOT FREE'! Adding the Wall of Remembrance will finally give meaning to that theme! The Memorial is the only means remaining to ensure future generations of Americans and foreign visitors will understand that the Korean War is a Benchmark of the 20th Century—the human cost of which should not be unknown!

