

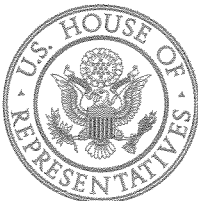
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CONGRESSMAN ED CASE
2ND DISTRICT, HAWAII

ISLANDS OF HAWAII, MAUI, KAHOLAWE, LANAI,
MOLOKA'I, O'AHU (WINDWARD, NORTH SHORE,
CENTRAL, LEEWARD), KAUAI AND NI'HAU,
AND NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

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STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN ED CASE
BEFORE THE HOUSE RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS
ON H.R. 4529, THE KALAUPAPA MEMORIAL ACT

September 28, 2006

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Christensen, and members of the subcommittee, thank you very much for providing me with an opportunity to testify in support of my bill, H.R. 4529, the Kalaupapa Memorial Act, which I was honored to introduce with my colleague, Congressman Neil Abercrombie, last December. I would also like to thank House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo and Ranking Member Nick Rahall for their support of today's hearing and for affording the people of Kalaupapa the opportunity to share their stories and Hawaii's history with you.

The Kalaupapa Memorial Act authorizes the establishment of a memorial at a suitable location or locations at Kalawao or Kalaupapa within the boundaries of Kalaupapa National Historical Park. That incredible park is located on the Island of Molokai, in my home State of Hawaii, and was created to honor and perpetuate the memory of those individuals who were forcibly relocated to the Kalaupapa Peninsula from 1866 to 1969.

Kalaupapa National Historical Park, encompassing most of the isolated and haunting Kalaupapa Peninsula and adjacent lands, was established a little over 25 years ago on December 22, 1980. In advance of the park's 25th anniversary last year, I introduced the Kalaupapa Memorial Act during a time of renewed commemoration of the park.

Kalaupapa National Historical Park is a very special and beautiful place with a rich and tragic history. While the park is widely known for the isolation and settlement of Hansen's disease patients from 1866 until 1969, Native Hawaiians inhabited the Kalaupapa Peninsula for close to a millennium prior to being forcibly removed from their homelands between 1865 and 1895. Surrounded on three sides by ocean and the fourth by steep cliffs, Kalaupapa is spectacularly breathtaking and ecologically diverse, home to nearly twenty federally listed threatened and endangered species of plants and animals. When one visits Kalaupapa today, it is like stepping back in time.

Due to its steep cliffs and isolated geography, the Kalaupapa Peninsula was used by the Kingdom of Hawaii, and subsequently the Territory and State of Hawaii, as an isolation settlement for individuals considered to have Hansen's disease for nearly a century.

By law, individuals were forcibly separated from their families and isolated at Kalaupapa to “protect the welfare of society.” These isolation laws, dating back to 1865, were not abolished until 1969.

Although the World Health Organization still documents over a million registered cases of Hansen’s disease worldwide, today it is considered one of the least contagious of all communicable diseases due to established and successful drug treatments. In Hawaii, those needing medical treatment outside of Kalaupapa are able to go to the Hale Mohalu wing of Leahi Hospital in Honolulu.

However, that is now, but the history of Kalaupapa is otherwise. Between 1866 and 1896, the first 5,000 individuals were forcibly relocated to Kalaupapa; most lived at Kalawao. The second wave of patients (approximately 3,000) occurred after 1896 until 1969, when most of the community lived on the Kalaupapa side of the peninsula. Most of these individuals died on the peninsula; while many of their final resting places are known and remembered, many are not.

It is right and appropriate that these many lives be remembered, both individually and collectively, within the boundaries of the world to which they were condemned for life, through maintenance of the park itself, the history of the settlement, and an appropriate memorial. Ka Ohana O Kalaupapa, a non-profit organization consisting of patient residents at Kalaupapa National Historical Park and their family members and friends, was established in August 2003 for just this purpose: to promote the value and dignity of the 8,000+ individuals (at least 90% of who were Native Hawaiian) who were forcibly relocated to the Kalaupapa Peninsula.

Since its establishment, Ka Ohana O Kalaupapa has sought to honor and perpetuate the memory of these 8,000+ individuals through the establishment of a memorial at a suitable location or locations at Kalawao or Kalaupapa within the boundaries of Kalaupapa National Historical Park. I fully support its efforts, which have broad-based support from the Kalaupapa Patients’ Advisory Council and the community.

The national and international significance of Kalaupapa is the rich and tragic history of the lives and memories of those individuals who were forcibly relocated to the Kalaupapa Peninsula between 1866 and 1969. It is fitting and appropriate that our nation, through the National Park Service, ensure that they are never forgotten through the establishment of a memorial.

I therefore believe that the establishment of a memorial is consistent with the basis for the park’s existence. It is timely. And it will enhance the purpose of the park, which is to “preserve and interpret the Kalaupapa settlement for the education and inspiration of present and future generations.”

I look forward to working with my House colleagues, particularly members of the House Resources Committee, the National Park Service, the Hawaii congressional delegation, Ka Ohana O Kalaupapa, and others, on the enactment into law of the Kalaupapa Memorial Act. Mahalo.