

# Committee on Resources

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STATEMENT OF

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NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, AND PUBLIC LANDS

COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WITH RESPECT TO

VISITOR CENTER FOR THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL (H.R. 1442)

WASHINGTON, D.C. MAY 21, 2003

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of the 2.6 million men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and our Ladies Auxiliary, I am pleased to testify here today in support of

H.R. 1442, legislation to authorize the design and construction of a visitor center for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial or The Wall has stood since its dedication in 1982 as a national symbol of the service and sacrifice of those who paid the ultimate price in defending our democratic way of life in Vietnam. More than this, it has come to recognize and to honor the courage and patriotism of all of the veterans of that war as well as all of those who have served this nation in uniform and stood in harm's way to protect our precious liberty. In commemorating these fallen heroes of Vietnam, it tangibly venerates the veterans of all wars—past, present, and future.

Among the 4.4 million individuals who visit The Wall annually, countless reunions and instances of mental and spiritual healing have taken place. It has become the locus for reflection and inspiration for veterans and non-veterans alike. In this way, it has gone beyond its purely symbolic role and become a place where the lessons of history are considered and, indeed, taught on a daily basis.

This memorial offers young and old alike the opportunity to learn the lessons of the Vietnam War and to develop a deeper awareness and understanding of the true meaning of both sacrifice in service of others and patriotism itself. The Visitor Center under consideration today is perfectly in keeping with this role.

The Visitor Center will serve as a contemplative venue to collect remembrances of the individuals' names that will be inscribed on The Wall. Significantly, it will allow visitors to learn the importance of the Memorial, its role in helping to evoke the memory of those who served, and its place in promoting healing among those who fought in Vietnam and between these men and women and the society they once so bravely served. It is for this reason that the Veterans of Foreign Wars strongly supports the expeditious construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center in providing a unique and profound historical experience to benefit untold generations to come.

Thank you. This completes my testimony and I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

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