

# **Committee on Resources**

## **Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands**

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### **Witness Statement**

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**Statement of  
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA  
Submitted by  
Ed Croucher  
Executive Director  
Before the  
House of Representatives  
Committee on Resources  
Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands  
Regarding  
H.R. 3293**

**To amend the law that authorized the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to authorize the placement within the site of the memorial of a plaque to honor those Vietnam veterans who died after their service in the Vietnam war, but as a direct result of that service.**

**March 16, 2000**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today in support of the project to have a memorial established to honor those veterans that have died as a result of service in Vietnam and are not eligible to be listed on the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial.**

**I am Ed Croucher, the Executive Director of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), the only Congressionally chartered service organization representing veterans of the Vietnam War. Our membership has close personal ties with the Wall and would never support any project that would detract from the dignity of that special memorial. To those that will argue that the In Memory Memorial Plaque somehow detracts from the Wall, we respectfully disagree. VVA believes that this plaque will add a very needed piece to the overall meaning of the thirteen (13) acre Vietnam Veteran War Memorial plot.**

## REMARKS

As you have heard, there are many, many casualties from the Vietnam War that are not acknowledged by the Vietnam Veteran War Memorial. The need for this acknowledgment is expressed every day in mementos left at the Wall. There are literally thousands of these heart wrenching mementos from families and friends of those that have died but are not included on the Wall stored for safe keeping in Maryland. The persons placing these mementos are seeking closure and often leave the Vietnam Veteran War Memorial disappointed that existing monuments do not provide the comfort they seek.

We have inquiries from all across America from families or friends of deceased Vietnam Veterans who have died subsequent to the War from the effects of Agent Orange, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or physical wounds, requesting information about getting their friend or loved one listed on the Wall. We dutifully inform them of the criteria for a name to be placed on the Wall and often find ourselves trying to answer questions without answers. The placement of an appropriate memorial on the grounds will serve this purpose.

There are those that feel that any additional elements to the Vietnam Veteran War Memorial area will clutter the area and detract from the original intent and purpose. This argument is justified because there has been an ongoing continuous list of proposals submitted for consideration. The same persons will argue that when the Woman's Memorial was added that this was to be the last monument to be added and that the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial was now complete. This has proven to not be true. The Vietnam Veterans War Memorial is not complete without some acknowledgment of those dying in the aftermath of the war, from injuries or disabilities suffered in Vietnam.

Vietnam Veterans of America opposes anything that would detract or diminish the power of the Wall. The In Memory Memorial as proposed is intended to be unobtrusive and can be located on the thirteen acre plot in such a way to not interfere with the Wall. The same concerns were expressed during the decision process for the Women's Memorial. I am sure you will agree now that it does not detract or diminish the impact of the Wall in any way. Just the opposite is true; it adds a dimension that was missing. I want to suggest that the In Memory Memorial will have the same effect. It will add to the overall effectiveness of the Vietnam Veteran War Memorial area.

There is some merit to the charge that this project is just another idea in a long and continuing series of additions to the Vietnam Veteran War Memorial and the concern that we are turning the Memorial area into a trail of insignificant memorials. Vietnam

**Veterans of America agrees that some of the projects proposed for addition to the Vietnam Veteran War Memorial have been unworthy and should not be approved. However this memorial project is clearly not of the same caliber. It meets a clear need; it is a very significant and appropriate project; it adds to the collective history of the Vietnam War; it will add to the purpose of the Vietnam Veteran War Memorial and not diminish the respect or power of the other memorials in this area.**

**VVA urges the Committee to do the right thing by approving this worthwhile project. We further urge prompt passage of HR 3293 by this Committee and full House of Representatives.**

**In closing I want to thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of VVA in support of the In Memory Memorial project. Are there any questions from the distinguished members of the Committee that I might answer?**

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