

Committee on Resources

resources.committee@mail.house.gov

[Home](#) [Press Gallery](#) [Subcommittees](#) [Issues](#) [Legislation](#) [Hearing Archives](#)

Testimony of Mr. James V. Kimsey to the House Resources Committee about H.R.1442 (Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center Act)

May 21, 2003 ~ Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Resources Committee as a Vietnam veteran, a 1962 Graduate of West Point and a native Washingtonian, I am honored to be part of these proceedings today. For more than three years, I have been actively involved with the efforts by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to place a Visitor Center at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

I would like to state for the record that I fully support a Visitor Center at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Currently I serve as chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Corporate Council, business leaders who represent many of the world's largest corporations and who all share the common bond of service in the Vietnam War. The Corporate Council works to move forward the Memorial Fund's mission of honoring, healing and education through several innovative outreach programs.

Just over five years ago, it was the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Corporate Council that brought forward the idea of expanding the mission of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to include Educating about the impact of the Vietnam War. What resulted was a comprehensive curriculum kit, featuring a teachers' guide, books and other valuable resources. The Educational program, known as Echoes From The Wall, was sent free of charge to the nation's 40,000 secondary schools.

Today, teachers and students throughout the U.S. are benefiting from the educational programs of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. But that good start cannot end in America's classrooms. It must continue when those students visit the Nation's Capital. It must continue when they visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This underground Visitor Center MUST be here...on this site.

As the founding CEO of America Online, Inc., I have been an ardent supporter of technology and education, and through my Foundation I have been dedicated to helping bring a brighter future for, and tapping into the vast potential, of this area's youth. I sit on numerous boards and lend my support to many civic and charitable organizations.

Through this work, I have had the opportunity to speak with educators about challenges that they face in today's classrooms. I have listened carefully to their concerns. One of their biggest: making history relevant so that our young people understand the principles that helped to build our country and make it the most powerful in the world.

A few years ago, we commissioned a survey about Vietnam War education in America's secondary schools. Vietnam was the longest war in our nation's history. It splintered this country unlike any other in modern history.

But, students do not learn about Vietnam. In fact, the survey found that high school students are taught less about the Vietnam War than any other major American conflict.

Only one-third of students between ages 12 to 17 is taught about the Vietnam War as opposed to nearly two thirds who learn about the Revolutionary War and World War II. It also found less than two-thirds of students between the ages of 12-17 know on which continent Vietnam is located. Thirteen percent of the students thought that Vietnam was located in Europe and 3% of the respondents believed Vietnam was in North America.

Mr. Chairman and Members of Committee, as we celebrate The Wall and all that it's accomplished, we realize there is more to be done. Our most important mission: Educating our children about the war – our nation's longest and most divisive conflict

There are some who have referred to Vietnam veterans as America's Forgotten Veterans – I reject that. All you here today will have the power to make certain that those veterans and that war will not be forgotten.

We will teach our children the lessons we learned as soldiers and as a country, and we will accomplish two goals. one, we will educate our country's youth, and two, we will continue The Wall's work of healing our nation.

Many of our country's children know very little, if anything, about the Vietnam War. There's a generational disconnect. We cannot let this happen, not as veterans, not as a nation.

We were young men and women fighting in an unpopular war, the youngest armed forces the U.S. has ever sent into combat. So, when we embark on our educational outreach to young people across the U.S., they will be able to understand that the Vietnam War was not some political battle of old men in a faraway land.

These were people almost their own age, faced with difficult choices and incredible challenges; challenges they may have to face someday. They should be ready and we owe it to them to make sure they are.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I encourage you to support H.R.1442 (The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Visitor Center Act) to ensure that our nation's young people will have the opportunity to learn about service and sacrifice at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for generations to come.

Thank you.

####