

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH M. LAWLER  
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

CONCERNING H.R. 562, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE GOVERNMENT OF UKRAINE TO ESTABLISH A MEMORIAL  
ON FEDERAL LAND IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA TO HONOR THE VICTIMS OF THE MANMADE FAMINE  
THAT OCCURRED IN UKRAINE IN 1932-1933

June 9, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 562, a bill to authorize the Government of Ukraine to establish a memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia to honor the victims of the manmade famine that occurred in Ukraine in 1932-1933.

The Department opposes enactment of this legislation because it duplicates efforts currently underway to establish a memorial that would honor all victims of communism worldwide. This memorial, the Victims of Communism Memorial, was authorized by P.L. 103-199 on December 17, 1993.

H.R. 562 would authorize the Government of Ukraine to establish a memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia to honor the men, women, and children who perished by famine under communist rule in Ukraine from 1932-1933. The bill would require that the establishment of the memorial comply with the major provisions of the Commemorative Works Act, but contains minor exceptions to four provisions. Two provisions require a commemorative work to have significance to the American experience, and two relate to the requirement that the Secretary maintain and preserve the memorial. As a memorial gift from a foreign nation, the Government of Ukraine would be responsible for establishing, constructing, maintaining and preserving the memorial.

The people of Ukraine were brought to the verge of physical extinction in 1932-1933 when a manmade disaster resulted in the deaths of millions of innocent men, women, and children. The Soviet Government, under the political control of Joseph Stalin, used food as a weapon to annihilate or suppress the political and cultural identity of the Ukrainian people. To fill impossibly high grain quotas, assigned brigades seized the 1932 crop from one of the world's most fertile farmlands. Those who resisted giving up their crops were killed. Millions of people starved while stockpiles of seized grain rotted by the tons. Attempts were made by the United States Government to intercede at the height of the famine to provide food and other necessary supplies to help the starving people of Ukraine. In 1988, the United States Commission on the Ukraine Famine reported that the people of Ukraine were victims of genocide, or "starved to death in a man-made famine."

The National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (Commission), established in 1986 to review proposals to establish memorials and provide its recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior and committees of Congress, reviewed this proposal on March 15, 2005. While it supported a similar proposal in the 108th Congress, the Commission has since considered revisions made by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (Foundation) to expand its effort as a two-fold commemoration. The Foundation is proposing a memorial to victims of communism worldwide that would be supplemented by a virtual museum to tell the history of the impact of communism. The Commission also concluded that because the Victims of Communism Memorial would encompass the history of the Ukraine Famine as well as that of 120 different nationalities, ethnic groups, and countries that were also victims of communism, it would not endorse legislation proposed to provide a separate, specific recognition of this or other national or ethnic groups that already would be recognized in the Victims of Communism Memorial.

We agree with the approach of commemorating the millions of victims of communism worldwide, including those who suffered immeasurably during the horrific Ukraine Famine, through the Victims of Communism Memorial. While the victims of the Ukraine Famine obviously deserve our highest recognition, we believe that creating separate memorials for individual groups would detract from the overall message of the Victims of Communism Memorial and could, potentially, create an unfortunate competition amongst various groups for limited memorial sites in our Nation's Capital. The Foundation envisions this monument as a visible symbol for those who have suffered atrocities to human rights and perished. The Foundation has secured site approvals for placement of the Victims of Communism Memorial within sight of the United States Capitol.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to comment. This concludes my prepared remarks and I will be happy to answer any questions you or other committee members might have.