

# **Committee on Resources,**

## **Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, & Public Lands**

[parks](#) - - Rep. Joel Hefley, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6207 - - (202) 226-7736

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### **Witness Statement**

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**STATEMENT OF JOHN G. PARSONS, ASSOCIATE REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR LANDS, RESOURCES AND PLANNING, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 1161, TO AUTHORIZE THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC TO ESTABLISH A MEMORIAL TO HONOR TOMAS G. MASARYK IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**MAY 8, 2001**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 1161, to authorize the establishment of a memorial to Tomas G. Masaryk in the District of Columbia.

The Department supports the establishment of a memorial to Tomas G. Masaryk on Federal lands in the District of Columbia or its environs, but only if H.R. 1161 is amended to bring this proposal into conformance with the Commemorative Works Act of 1986. On April 26, 2001, representatives of the Czech Republic met with the National Capital Memorial Commission to share the intent of that government to make a gift of this memorial to the people of the United States. The American Friends of the Czech Republic is one of several groups based in the United States who have joined to participate in this effort. Enactment of an amended H.R. 1161 would provide the mechanism by which the acceptance of this gift could occur.

Tomas Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, stands in history as the best embodiment of the close ties between the United States and Czechoslovakia. He knew America from his own experience over four decades of repeated trips as a philosopher, scholar, and teacher. He married a young woman from Brooklyn, New York, Charlotte Garrigue, and carried her name as his own. Masaryk's relationship with America is illustrated by his writings, speeches, and articles contained in the Library of Congress. His personal relationships with President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of State Robert Lansing led to the recognition by the United States of a free Czechoslovakia in 1918.

Inspired by the writings of Jefferson and the values of Lincoln, Masaryk wrote the Czechoslovakian Declaration of Independence from Austria that was signed in Philadelphia and issued in Washington on October 18, 1918, where he was declared President of Czechoslovakia. His view of government served as a blueprint for the creation of new nation states after the First World War and he stands as a symbol of the politics of morality, a world leader, and a steadfast friend of the United States.

The National Capital Memorial Commission met to review H.R. 1161 in order to advise the Secretary of the

Interior and the Congress on this matter as is required by the Commemorative Works Act of 1986. The commission unanimously endorsed this proposed memorial gift, with the requirement that legislation conforms with the Commemorative Works Act.

Section 1(b) of H.R. 1161 directs the placement of this memorial in a designated site in the nation's capital. We believe this language should be deleted because it precludes the public participation in site evaluation and approval required by the Commemorative Works Act. This provision would also prohibit memorial sponsors from the consideration of any alternative site absent additional future legislation.

We also recommend language be added to reflect that this memorial is a gift of the government and the people of the Czech Republic. The people of the United States have enjoyed strong ties and goodwill with the peoples of foreign nations around the globe, and many symbols of this mutual esteem have taken the form of commemorative works. A commemorative gift of this nature is not considered a traditional commemorative work as defined under Section 2(c) of the Commemorative Works Act, and this distinction should be reflected in the text of H.R. 1161. We believe language, which recognizes the international significance of the sincere and gracious intent of the government and the people of the Czech Republic, would be highly appropriate.

Finally, language clarifying that the United States Government shall not pay any expenses related to the maintenance of the memorial should be added to Section 1(d) of the bill. Our support for H.R. 1161 is conditioned on the memorial not contributing to the National Park Service's deferred maintenance backlog. We would be glad to work with the committee on drafting appropriate language.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

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