

Chair Grijalva, Ranking member Bishop, and respected members of the committee, thank you for today's hearing to discuss H.R.2689. This bill will authorize the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia, as a unit of the National Park System. I am also honored to be joined by Dr. William McIntosh, President of the National D-Day Memorial Foundation. I first spoke to Dr. McIntosh many months ago about the dire financial situation of the Memorial and I have since worked with him to help find a solution to resolve the difficulties facing the Memorial.

The National D-Day Memorial remembers and preserves the lessons and legacy of D-Day, forever memorializing the lives lost on June 6, 1944. Of the thirty-four soldiers from Bedford nineteen died in combat. As the city's population at the time was only 3,200, Bedford suffered the highest proportional loss of life of any American city on D-Day. The men we lost were local heroes, but the freedom and security bought with their sacrifice is a national treasure. This story of sacrifice at D-Day is not just a story that took place on the beaches of Normandy but a tale of local communities across America. The battlefield may have been in Europe but the losses were felt here at home. The National D-Day Memorial was authorized by President Bill Clinton in 1996, and dedicated by President George W. Bush in 2001. This past June was the 65th Anniversary of D-Day. Just shortly before the Anniversary Elisha Ray Nance, the last surviving "Bedford Boy," passed away yesterday at the age of 94.

In August, the National Park Service made a site visit to the D-Day Memorial to follow up on a request from Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar to study the suitability of using the Antiquities Act to preserve the Memorial. In the words of Secretary Salazar, "The memorial stands as a symbol of the courage and sacrifices of all members of the United States and Allied Forces who began the liberation of northwest Europe as part of Operation Overlord." The question of the suitability of using the Antiquities Act, while an important road to consider, is separate and distinct from the more traditional method to authorize a full study of the feasibility of designating the National D-Day Memorial as part of the National Park System. I am not here to speak about the ongoing activities within the National Parks Service in studying the Memorial and the Antiquities Act, but rather advocate for the legislation before this subcommittee that would provide for the protection and preservation of the Memorial through the traditional process should the Antiquities Act be found unsuitable.

Anyone who visits the Memorial will see that it is far more than just a structure. Dedicated to preserving the lessons and legacy of D-Day, the Memorial works to educate all generations about the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of the Allied Forces. The Memorial works to teach current generations about the Greatest Generation and what life was like not just for those fighting on D-Day but their friends, families, and communities back home during the war. The National D-Day Memorial Foundation has a Victory Garden in which at-risk youth are taught about the war effort at home by growing their own fruits and vegetables. The Memorial also works with veterans of World War II to preserve oral histories and their memories of D-Day and the war. This is a national treasure that serves as a permanent reminder of the bravery and heroism of our American armed forces.