

STATEMENT OF BRUCE SHEAFFER, COMPTROLLER, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION, OF THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, CONCERNING H.R. 2175, A BILL TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO INSTALL IN THE AREA OF THE WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA A SUITABLE PLAQUE OR AN INSCRIPTION WITH THE WORDS THAT PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT PRAYED WITH THE UNITED STATES ON JUNE 6, 1944, THE MORNING OF D-DAY.

May 20, 2014

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 2175, a bill which directs the Secretary of the Interior to install in the area of the World War II Memorial in the District of Columbia a suitable plaque or an inscription with the words that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt prayed with the United States on June 6, 1944, the morning of D-Day.

The Department appreciates the importance of faith in the lives of Americans across this country, the leadership of President Roosevelt, and the courage and sacrifices of Americans during World War II and today. The World War II Memorial recognizes a period of unprecedented national unity during the defining moment of the twentieth century, and is devoted to the service, commitment, and shared sacrifice of Americans.

H.R. 2175 proposes adding a commemorative work in the area of the existing World War II Memorial. We support the continued application of the Commemorative Works Act (CWA). Section 2 of this bill states that the Secretary of the Interior shall design, procure, prepare, and install the plaque or inscription, thus allowing the NPS to determine the placement and design of the plaque. However, section 3 of the bill requires a different method of designing and locating the plaque or inscription than is provided in the CWA. The CWA process incorporates important design reviews and public consultation. We support retaining the CWA as the vehicle for siting and designing this plaque or inscription.

The World War II Memorial was authorized on May 23, 1993, by Public Law 103-32. In 1994, Congress approved its placement in the area containing the National Mall through Public Law 103-422. Its location at the site of the Rainbow Pool was approved in 1995 by the NPS on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). In July 1997, the CFA and the NCPC reaffirmed prior approvals of the Rainbow Pool site in recognition of the significance of World War II as the single-most defining event of the 20th Century for Americans and the world. Even so, there were challenges to the establishment of this memorial. The design we see today was painstakingly arrived upon after years of public deliberations and spirited public debate.

The National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) reviewed a proposal similar to the one before the committee today at its meeting on September 14, 2011, and determined that no additional elements should be inserted into this carefully designed Memorial. The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), charged by the Congress in Public Law 103-32 to design and build the World War II Memorial, is represented on the NCMAC, and thus concurred with that determination.

If directed by Congress pursuant to this legislation, the NPS will work to find an appropriate location for the plaque in accordance with the CWA process, as directed in section 3 of this legislation.

That concludes our prepared testimony on H.R. 2175, and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.