



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

IN REPLY REFER TO:

W24 (NCR-LRP)

AUG 2 2011

Honorable Jeff Bingaman
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to report to you the findings of the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (Commission) which met on June 23, 2011, to review S. 253 and S. 883, two bills now under consideration by your Committee. The Commission was established under the Commemorative Works Act of 1986 (40 U.S.C. 89, et. seq.). This letter is intended to fulfill the requirements of Section 8903(d) of that Act, which states that the Congress shall solicit the views of the Commission in considering legislation authorizing commemorative works within the District of Columbia and its environs.

(b) S. 253, a bill to establish a World War I National Memorial Commission and reestablish the District of Columbia World War Memorial as the National World War I Memorial.

The Commission considered testimony from Congressman Ted Poe, Edwin Fountain, Director, World War I Memorial Foundation, Joseph Grano, President of the Rhodes Tavern-D.C. Heritage Society, Nelson Rimensnyder, Historian of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia, and William Brown, President of the Association of the Oldest Inhabitants of the District of Columbia.

The Commission recognized that the District of Columbia World War Memorial has a unique significance to the citizens of the District of Columbia and recommends that this memorial not be reestablished as a national memorial. The Commission noted that memorials can achieve prominence and high visitation without being located directly on the Mall, and recognized that the Memorial to General Pershing and the fighting forces in World War I was authorized by the Congress and built by the American Battle Monuments Commission on Pennsylvania Avenue as the national memorial to World War I. The Commission discussed Mr. Grano's and Mr. Rimensnyder's recommendations that the site, design, and national character of this memorial could better support the enhancements intended by S. 253. The Commission concluded that enhancements intended to provide a greater commemoration of World War I may be better suited at the National World War I Memorial in Pershing Park, but cautioned that the

modification of the existing memorial in Pershing Park was not within the scope of S. 253 and should not be explored or recommended within the scope of the Commission's evaluation of S. 253.

S. 883, a bill to authorize the National Mall Liberty Fund D.C. to establish a memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia to honor free persons and slaves who fought for independence, liberty, and justice for all during the American Revolution.

The Commission considered testimony provided by Senator Joseph Lieberman, sponsor of S. 883, and Maurice Barboza, founder of the National Mall Liberty Fund D.C.

The Commission noted that S. 883 would direct that the memorial be located within Area I without benefit of public participation or the participation of the Secretary of the Interior, both of which were actions that cannot be sanctioned under the Commemorative Works Act. This direction contradicts the site approval authority provided to the Secretary, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) under the Commemorative Works Act.

The Commission recommends its support for S. 883, provided that it is brought into conformance with the Commemorative Works Act by deleting the word "preeminent" in Section 1, and the reference to Area I in Section 2(A)(i). Should the Congress enact this proposal into law and the National Mall Liberty Fund DC seek Area 1 designation, the Commission would welcome the opportunity to assist the Secretary of the Interior in considering the request, pursuant to Section 8908(b)(1) of the Commemorative Works Act.

I would be pleased to answer any questions or to provide further information if you so desire. I and my staff are available to assist you and can be reached at (202) 619-7097.

Sincerely,



Peter May
Chairman, National Capital Memorial Commission