Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources
House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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 four bills now under consideration by your Committee, H.R. 854, H.R. 938, H.R. 1559, and H.R. 1619. 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.

**H.R. 854, A bill to authorize the Peace Corps Commemorative Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs to commemorate the establishment of the Peace Corps and to honor the ideals upon which it was founded.**

The Commission considered testimony by Representative Sam Farr, sponsor of H.R. 854.

The Commission noted that a similar proposal had been reviewed on April 21, 2010 (H.R. 4195, 111th Congress). At that time, the members saw merit in the proposal, but also recognized that there was a risk of unwelcome precedent if the Commission did not insist that a very explicit description be provided in proposals to commemorate ideals, and that only ideals clearly identified as being exemplary of America's highest and best nature should be considered.

The Commission concluded that H.R. 854 clarifies the special nature of the Peace Corps, clearly describes the Peace Corps ideals, and connects the ideals to the exceptional aspects of American character that are exhibited in the ideals of the Peace Corps. H.R. 854 addresses the concerns expressed by the Commission on April 21, 2010, and clearly identifies that the ideals proposed to be commemorated are exemplary of America's highest and best nature, and the Commission supports the legislation as drafted.
H.R. 938, 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 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 H.R. 938. 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 H.R. 938 and should not be explored or recommended within the scope of the Commission’s evaluation of H.R. 938.

H.R. 1559, to authorize the Benjamin Harrison Society to establish a memorial to the Patriots of the American Revolution and the War of 1812.

The Commission considered testimony from Acquinetta Anderson, Vice President, Benjamin Harrison Society, Mrs. Virginia Hayes Williams, Mr. Jim Raleigh, and Ms. Jeanne Sheffield-Estrada.

Through the testimony provided by the witnesses and their engagement in discussions with the Commission about the purpose of the memorial, the Commission identified that the goals of the Benjamin Harrison Society goals are to commemorate the virtues and importance of patriotism, and to educate about the importance of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812.

The Commission found H.R. 1559 to be extraordinarily wide-ranging in direction and recommended further refinement as a proposal to establish a commemorative work.

Regarding the scope of the memorial, the Commission suggested that the events proposed to be commemorated were in two distinct periods in history and too separate and complex to combine into one memorial. The Commission noted that combining the commemoration of two wars with a memorial to patriotism, as a concept, was potentially confusing. Members further noted that several memorials in the District of Columbia already exemplify patriotic service in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and did not believe that the proposal or testimony received illustrated any gap or inadequacy in that regard that necessitated this new proposed memorial.
In consideration of the educational goals identified by the proponents, the Commission questioned whether this purpose would be best accomplished through the medium of a commemorative work and whether the proponents should consider a museum or other medium as a more appropriate vehicle to achieve their goals.

**H.R. 1619, the "MADE Act of 2011," a bill to amend the Commemorative Works Act to require that commemorative works in the District of Columbia be constructed of materials that are grown, produced or manufactured in the United States.**

In regard to introducing these amendments into the Commemorative Works Act, the Commission cautioned that crafting amendments to the Act should be done only with the utmost caution and should be avoided as a means to address singular issues. The Commission recognized that these provisions are similar to those of the Buy American Act of 1933 and indicated their support for the intent of that Act. The Commission felt that in regard to the evolution of the art and architecture of a commemorative work, the provisions proposed by H.R. 1619 would unduly limit artistic freedoms and unreasonably restrict memorial designers and architects to the detriment of the quality and character of future memorials.

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,

[Signature]

Peter May  
Chairman, National Capital Memorial Commission