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**TESTIMONY OF NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MUSEUM FOUNDATION PRESIDENT AND CEO
JOSEPH DANIELS TO THE NATIONAL CAPITAL MEMORIAL ADVISORY COMMISSION
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2020**

Good Afternoon.

First of all, thank you to the members of this commission for allowing me to be here today to talk about this historic project.

To the Medal of Honor recipients who are here, thank you for entrusting me and the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation with this amazingly significant responsibility to permanently commemorate and enshrine the stories and memories of Medal of Honor recipients in the hearts of the American public whom you have bravely and selflessly served and defended.

There is no higher honor bestowed on a member of the United States Armed Forces for valor in combat than the Medal of Honor. There is, therefore, no higher privilege for those of us on the Foundation team than to be part of recognizing and properly honoring the sacrifices of those who have received the only military medal given in the name of Congress and therefore directly in the name of the American people.

President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation creating the Medal of Honor in 1861 and the first medal was awarded on March 25, 1863. In 1990 President George H.W. Bush signed legislation from Congress designating March 25th National Medal of Honor Day. Since 1863, just over 3500 individuals have received the Medal of Honor. They have served in every American war and conflict since the Civil War, and every branch of the United States military is represented.

Recipients of the Medal of Honor are from every state in the union and are selected without concern for race, gender, religious and political affiliation or any other such identifier. The quality all these individuals do have in common is that in the toughest situations imaginable, and against all odds, they distinguished themselves with acts of valor without concern for their own person, safety, or wellbeing.

The Medal of Honor represents not only these individual acts of selfless valor, but also six core values which go directly to the heart of what it means to be an American and to put others above self. Courage, sacrifice, patriotism, citizenship, integrity, and commitment are American ideals embodied in the Medal of Honor and they are values that unify and inspire all of us.



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The purpose of the Medal of Honor Monument authorized by the legislation being considered today is not only to recognize the bravery of generations of highly

distinguished heroes who gave so much, many giving even their lives, but to inspire future generations of Americans to live lives bigger than themselves.

Monuments and memorials are created to mark significant events or honor larger than life individuals from the past, but they also exist to inspire, to promote reflection, and to motivate us to become better versions of ourselves.

When you look around Washington, D.C. there is no doubt we have memorialized the greatest giants of our republic and I believe each of them would agree the men and woman who have distinguished themselves and received the Medal of Honor deserve a seat among them. In fact, I believe they would uniformly argue the distinguished soldier is more deserving than themselves.

President Abraham Lincoln who now sits perched on and watching out over our national mall famously said, "A nation that does not honor its heroes will not long endure."

Though he isn't here to speak to the need for this Medal of Honor monument today, I believe Lincoln made his position on the matter very clear. On March 18, 1864 he declared, "For it has been said, all that a man has will he give for his life; and while all contribute of their substance the soldier puts his life at stake, and often yields up in his country's cause. The highest merit, then is due to the soldier."

His sentiments have been echoed by every president of both parties as they have followed in his footsteps honoring those willing to wear the uniform and defend our country. In fact, all four living past Presidents of the United States are honorary directors of this amazing project. I believe it speaks volumes about the national significance and need for this monument that President Carter, President Clinton, President Bush, and President Obama have come together to offer us their full and unequivocal support.

Respect for our military, especially those who have distinguished themselves in service, has always united Americans. To that end, I believe this project is extremely timely as we face an era of deep political and philosophical divides. We need to inspire our fellow Americans to look beyond the circumstances of today, reflect on lives and acts of selfless heroism, and aspire to the greatness they embody.



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It's a privilege to be sitting here today with Medal of Honor recipient Major General Pat Brady. General Brady served in the United States Army in Vietnam. President Nixon presented him with the Medal of Honor in 1969 after his second tour in Vietnam.

General Brady would never say this about himself, but I'll tell you, he's known worldwide as one of the greatest helicopter pilots of all time and he put those skills to fearless use to save dozens of lives. I want to share a couple lines from his Medal of Honor citation with you today:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty, Major General Brady distinguished himself while serving in the Republic of Vietnam commanding a UH-1H ambulance helicopter, volunteered to rescue wounded men from a site in enemy held territory which was reported to be heavily defended and to be blanketed by fog...

...Although his aircraft had been badly damaged and his controls partially shot away during his initial entry into this area, he returned minutes later and rescued the remaining injured...

...Throughout that day, Major General Brady utilized three helicopters to evacuate a total of 51 seriously wounded men, many of whom would have perished without prompt medial treatment. Major General Brady's bravery was in the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself and the U.S. Army.

We are also joined today by Lt. Col. Will Swenson. President Obama presented Will the Medal of Honor in 2013. At the ceremony in the East Wing of the White House, the President had this to say as part of his remarks to the assembled crowd:

Moments like this, Americans like Will, remind us what our country can be at its best -- a nation of citizens who look out for one another; not just when it's easy, but when it's hard; especially when it's hard. Will, you're an example to everyone in this city, to our whole country -- of the professionalism and patriotism we should strive for -- whether we wear the uniform or not. Not just on particular occasions, but all the time.

These are just brief clips from the stories and ceremonies of two of the more than 3500 heroic Americans who have received the Medal of Honor. Those who have risked everything, many making the ultimate sacrifice, to defend and preserve our great nation and their fellow countrymen.

Their stories have been told in books, in movies, in television dramas, by local and national news outlets, and by parents and grandparents passing down the memories of bravery from one generation to the next. In fact, this spring, one Medal of Honor recipient's story will even be told in comic book hero form and made available nationwide.



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There is a reason Americans from every walk of life are drawn to these individuals and their stories. They are historically unparalleled, uplifting, and inspiring. There is a reason every medium of public communication seizes on the opportunity to be part of telling these stories. They pique the national interest because of their deep national significance and relatable relevance.

When the master plans were laid out for the District of Columbia years ago, this is the type of nationally significant and unifying monument for which they so wisely set aside land to accommodate. When Congress passed the commemorative works act, they further preserved property in the heart of our nation to honor these types of heroes who have woven so much greatness into the fabric of our nation and whose stories speak directly to who we are as Americans.

Summarized, the American dream is the belief anyone can accomplish anything. What better reminder of that exists than Medal of Honor recipients, ordinary Americans who set fear aside to put others first, and accomplished absolutely, astonishingly, extraordinary things.

This project is a remarkable opportunity to, with a single monument, recognize every branch of the military, every battle since the Civil War, every state in the union, every generation since 1863, and individuals from every walk of life in our amazing country. No other monument proposed to date, or which will be proposed in the future encompasses so much of America.

On behalf of my team, with the support of four past Presidents of the United States, three former Defense and Service Secretaries, dozens of retired military generals and leaders, members of Congress, some of the leading philanthropists in America, living Medal of Honor recipients, and the families of those recipients who are no longer with us, I respectfully ask you to recommend this monument to Congress.

Thank you.