



September 13, 2019

Via Electronic Mail to: beth_porter@nps.gov

Mr. Peter May
Chairman
National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission
1100 Ohio Drive, SW.
Room 220
Washington, DC 20242
Attention: Beth Porter, Secretary to the Commission

Dear Chairman May,

It is my understanding that your Commission will be reviewing H.R. 3465/S.1969, bills to authorize the Fallen Journalists Memorial Foundation, on September 24, 2019 as part of your mission to advise the Secretary of the Interior, the Administrator of the General Services Administration, and Members and Committees of Congress regarding the establishment of commemorative works in the District of Columbia and its environs. On behalf of the News Leaders Association, I urge the commission to favorably recommend the passage of this legislation and support the creation of a Fallen Journalists Memorial.

The News Leaders Association was formed via the merger of the American Society of News Editors and the Associated Press Media Editors in September 2019. It aims to foster and develop the highest standards of trustworthy, truth-seeking journalism; to advocate for open, honest and transparent government; to fight for free speech and an independent press; and to nurture the next generation of news leaders committed to spreading knowledge that informs democracy.

It may be trivia to some, but it is of the utmost pride to our organization and our members, that the press is the only private business mentioned by name in the United States Constitution. Our Founding Fathers recognized the essential service a free and vibrant press provides in acting as a surrogate for the public in overseeing the activities of government. The enshrinement of freedom of the press in the First Amendment to the Constitution reflected their belief that the press is a cornerstone of our Republic.

Much as the other memorials and monuments in our Nation's Capital honor the pillars and heroes of our democracy, so too would the Fallen Journalists Memorial be a fitting honor to those to served our country as members of a free press. While physical attacks on the press have been – thankfully – relatively rare when compared to those occurring other countries, many American journalists have tragically lost their lives in service to the public interest. Sadly, these



incidents have increased in recent years, most notably with the murders of five valued colleagues at the *Capitol Gazette* in Annapolis, Maryland on June 28, 2018.

Trif Alatzas, Publisher and editor-in-chief of the Baltimore Sun Media Group, owner of the *Capitol Gazette*, and Chase Cook, a reporter at the *Capitol Gazette*, spoke at the News Leaders Convention in Austin, Texas in September 2018. Just this week, we honored the staff of the *Capitol Gazette* as winners of our Al Neuharth Breaking News Reporting Award at our Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana.

We ask that you similarly honor these five journalists and all others in the United States and around the world who have been killed in the line of work.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Days'.

Michael Days
President
News Leaders Association.