

H.R. 5068

Women Who Worked on the Home Front World War II Memorial Act

STATEMENT OF DAVID VELA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, OPERATIONS, EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS ON H.R. 5068, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE WOMEN WHO WORKED ON THE HOME FRONT FOUNDATION TO ESTABLISH A COMMEMORATIVE WORK IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND ITS ENVIRONS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

December 4, 2019

Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 5068, a bill to authorize the Women Who Worked on the Home Front Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs.

The Department recognizes the contribution to the shaping of our Nation's history that is represented by the subject of H.R. 5068, but we recommend that the Committee defer action on this legislation until the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (Commission) has an opportunity to review the proposal.

H.R. 5608 would authorize the organization named the Women Who Worked on the Home Front Foundation to establish a commemorative work on Federal land in Washington, D.C. and its environs to commemorate the "commitment and service represented by women who worked on the home front during World War II." The bill requires compliance with the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. Chapter 89) (CWA) and prohibits Federal funds from being used to establish the memorial.

"Women Who Worked on the Home Front" refers to the countless American women who stepped up to support their nation during America's involvement in World War

II. Between 1941 and 1945, the female portion of the U.S. workforce increased from 27 percent to nearly 37 percent. More than 10,000 women worked as code breakers during WWII and over 1,100 female volunteers flew nearly every type of military aircraft as part of the Women Airforce Service Pilots program. Women were trained to fly military aircraft so male pilots could leave for combat duty overseas. Other jobs women filled, often for the first time, included keel welder, telegraph operator, steam hammer operator, radio engineer, electrical engineer, crane operator, flash welder, ship fitter, tinsmith, pipe fitter, surveyor, draftsman, and so much more. Of course, the now iconic image of Rosie the Riveter brings to mind the multitudes of women who worked in factories and shipyards during World War II, many of whom produced munitions and war supplies. The National Park Service is proud to have under its stewardship a park unit dedicated to this story, the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, California.

Ideas for new memorials benefit greatly from the review they receive through the Commission. We note that the proposed commemorative work has not yet been reviewed by the Commission. Established by the CWA, the Commission is staffed and chaired by the National Park Service and is composed of key government agency representatives who have a critical role or expertise in the location and design of monuments and memorials on Federal lands in DC. A key role of the Commission is to provide advice to the Senate and House Committees with jurisdiction over the National Park System on pending legislation that would authorize new commemorative works. The Commission plans to make recommendations to Congress on H.R. 5068 immediately following its next meeting, which is expected to be scheduled for February 2020.

While we believe it is premature for Congress to authorize this memorial, we support that H.R. 5608 requires the proposed memorial to be established in accordance with the CWA. This provision ensures that the memorial, if authorized, will be subject to the framework for planning and review that Congress established for all proposed commemorative works in areas administered by the National Park Service and the General Services Administration in the District of Columbia and its environs. This planning and review ensures there will be a thoughtful and deliberative process that will yield the most appropriate results.

We strongly support the bill's prohibition on Federal funds being used to establish the memorial, which assures that the cost of establishing this memorial will not be

borne by the National Park Service. However, the Committee should be aware that once constructed, the National Park Service would need to use funding for the maintenance of the memorial that could otherwise be used to help reduce the \$11.9 billion backlog of deferred maintenance in national parks and address other critical park needs.

Finally, the bill contains a provision we strongly support including in all legislation authorizing memorials under the CWA--the requirement that unspent funds for the construction of the memorial be provided to the National Park Foundation for deposit in an interest-bearing account, as stated in 40 U.S.C. Section 8906(b)(3).

Chairwoman Haaland, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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Testimony of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton
Hearing on H.R. 5068, the Women Who Worked
on the Home Front World War II Memorial Act
National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission
February 11, 2020

Thank you, Chairman May, for holding this hearing on H.R. 5068, the Women Who Worked on the Home Front World War II Memorial Act.

This bill would authorize the establishment of a memorial on federal land in the District of Columbia commemorating both the efforts of the 18 million American women who kept the home front running during World War II and the thousands of women who directly assisted the war effort, often behind the scenes. Women are dramatically underrepresented in our memorials.

You will hear testimony from my 17-year-old constituent Raya Kenney, the founder of the Women Who Worked on the Home Front Foundation. She initiated the idea to honor the women on the home front who supported the World War II effort, and I am very pleased to support her endeavor. Raya noticed that the women on the home front, whose efforts were so instrumental in maintaining the stability of the country during World War II, have not received much recognition for their contributions, compared to the men who fought bravely in World War II. I agree.

This bill would authorize the Women Who Worked on the Home Front Foundation to establish a memorial to honor these women. The memorial would be interactive to educate visitors on the important roles women played during World War II.

Between 1940 and 1945, the ratio of women in the workforce increased from 27 percent to nearly 37 percent, including 25 percent of married women. The work done by women on the home front opened doors for women in the workplace itself and had a profound effect on the job market going forward. The women on the home front redefined many occupations that were previously considered “men’s work.”

As women were working on the home front, many other women played critical roles directly supporting the war effort. More than 10,000 women served behind the scenes in World War II as codebreakers. Due to the classified nature of their work, they did not receive recognition for their tireless efforts until recently.

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Women were also trained to fly military aircraft so male pilots could leave for combat duty overseas. More than 1,100 female civilian volunteers flew nearly every type of military aircraft as part of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program. WASP flew planes from factories to bases, transported cargo and participated in simulation strafing and target missions. These women were not given full military status until 1977, and it was not until 2010 that they were recognized with the Congressional Gold Medal.

Women have largely been ignored in the memorials on federal land in the nation's capital, even though they played key roles in World War II and at other times in our history. During World War II, American women redefined what "women's work" looked like, from codebreaking and flying aircraft to health care and factory work. Women took jobs to support their families and their country. In light of these contributions, it is time for the women who worked on the home front to be properly recognized in the nation's capital.

I strongly urge the committee to support this bill.

**Written Statement of Raya Kenney, Founder, National Memorial to the Women Who Worked on
the Home Front Foundation**

National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission

February 11, 2020

Chair Peter May, thank you so much for inviting me to testify before the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission today. It is an honor and privilege to be here, and I am grateful that you are taking the time to consider my Foundation's request to build a monument.

My name is Raya Kenney, and I am the founder of the National Memorial to the Women Who Worked on the Home Front Foundation. Our goal is to get a monument built to the women who worked on the home front during WWII. A big thank you goes to Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton and her staff who have worked tirelessly to get this project to where it is today. We are now working with offices in the U.S. Senate to introduce bipartisan companion legislation.

This project started 7 years ago when I was in 5th grade. I was assigned a project to build a model monument to someone or something that hadn't been recognized in Washington, DC. Having just watched *A League of Their Own*, a film about the women baseball players of WWII, I had a newly found passion for the women who worked during the war, filling in the jobs the men off fighting could no longer occupy.

As I delved into my research, I learned there were over 18 million civilian women who worked on the home front. Typically, when people think about these women, they envision the "We can do it!" poster with Rosie the Riveter proudly flexing her arm. However, the women who worked were far more than just factory workers: They were coders, pilots, lumberjacks, taxi drivers, engineers, and mail carriers, among many other jobs. I was surprised to learn that no monument in Washington D.C. existed to commemorate their dedication and contributions to the war effort. Therefore, I chose to build my model monument to them, the 18 million women who I, before watching *A League of Their Own*, had never heard of.

As stated in the *National Capital Memorials and Commemorative Works Act*, the location of the memorial should "reflect a consensus of the lasting national significance of the subjects involved." Essentially, without the strength of these resilient women, we may have not won the war.

To begin, I sent out letters and emails to garner support for the idea and have received a lot of help along the way. The first big step occurred in 2016 when the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument invited me to the National Park Service's 100th-anniversary celebration to display my model monument. Everyone in attendance was incredibly supportive and administrators for the National Park Service said my design is what they look for in memorials and encouraged me to continue my efforts through reaching out to my representative, Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton. As evidenced by my presence here today, Representative Holmes Norton was supportive and introduced the legislation for this bill. But first, I would need a "sponsor group" to introduce the legislation, and so I formed a 501(c)(3), establishing my non-profit organization.

As stipulated by the National Capital Planning Commission's "Steps for Establishing A Memorial in the Nation's Capital," all funding for this project would be privately raised through the foundation using crowdsourcing and corporate donations; no government funding would be used. We would look to garner support from women's groups and organizations as well as companies that first employed the women during the war.

The proposed memorial design is shaped like a V to symbolize victory; a common formation during WWII at baseball games, school assemblies, and other public functions. Pillars are used to form the V shape; the pillars represent the women themselves as the pillars of strength that kept our country going. Brought to full size, the pillars would be constructed of black granite with the names of the jobs women filled etched on each side of each pillar. Of course, I would be excited about working with historians and the Library of Congress to ensure historical accuracy.

The monument is designed in a way as to not interfere with the view of any surrounding monuments or nature and, as the *Memorial and Museums Master Plan* put forth by the NCPC states, would "protect the beauty and openness of Washington's Monumental Core." It would allow people to sit and reflect on the women's important contributions, enjoy the day, and relax. I remain open to suggestions from the Commission and design professionals and look forward to hearing ideas to further the design.

As stated in the *Master Plan*, "Washington D.C. is a symbolic city where many of the Nation's values—Democracy, opportunity, diversity, and mobility—are defended and redeemed." If we look at Washington D.C., there is a severe lack of attention in our national landmarks given to women. Therefore, I believe it is paramount that we get this monument erected in our nations' capital and include these 18 million women who worked on the home front in the narrative.

As stated in the *Commemorative Works Act*, the memorial should be “located in surroundings that are relevant to the subject of the work.” During the war, the reflecting pool was lined with municipal buildings that federal workers (both men and women) occupied. The large, concrete structures remained in place until 1969. Though the Mall is closed, these buildings, positioned to the north of the Reflecting Pool, were in Area 1. I believe that any location in Area 1, outside of the reserve as close to the WWII Memorial or the Vietnam Memorial (that has taken the place of the municipal buildings) would fit the NCPC’s recommendations for an appropriate site. That said, I am aware that the NCPC and the National Park Service will have insights to share and will ultimately make the decision.

Meeting with women who have worked on the home front has been incredibly eye-opening. For example, Phyllis Gould, a 97-year-old Rosie who worked as a welder at Kaiser shipyards corresponds with me through letters and telephone calls and has said when discussing recognition of her barrier-breaking role, “I want it to be something permanent because [...] these women [...] worked and they did every job that was vacated by a guy going into the service.” With so few original Rosie’s left, we hope to see the monument authorized in their lifetimes. All the women who would be honored by this memorial were civilians, even the ones working for the military, and were not included under the GI Bill.

This is not a quick or easy process, but it's an important one. I love watching the WWII vets come to my hometown of Washington, D.C. on the tour buses to view their memorial; they are so proud and I often see people stop and clap for them. The women who worked on the home front were so instrumental in the war and they too deserve this recognition. The National Memorial to the Women Who Worked on the Home Front Foundation will help with that endeavor while increasing our understanding and appreciation of the contribution that these women made during the war, as well as paving the way for future generations.

According to NCPS’s *Master Plan*, a commemorative work must be of “preeminent historical and lasting significance.” As General Eisenhower said, “The contribution of the women of America, whether on the farm or in the factory or in uniform, to D-Day was a sine qua non (or necessary for)...the invasion effort.” Had we not won the war, we would live in a vastly different world today.

Thank you for supporting this ongoing work, and for allowing me to testify before you today. A big thank you goes to Covington and Burling LLP for their pro bono legal assistance and advocacy support. Another big thank you goes to the Davis Brody Bond for their kind pro bono assistance in rendering the

design and offering guidance. Thank you again to Representative Norton and all the cosponsors of this proposed bill: Representatives Jim Banks (R-IN), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Andre Carson (D-IN), Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), Deb Haaland (D-NM), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Ben Ray Luján (D-NM), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Darren Soto (D-FL), Tom Suozzi (D-NY), Susan Wild (D-PA). Thank you so much for everyone's incredible support. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time. I respectfully request that you consider authorizing this memorial to these incredible women. Thank you.