

July 21, 2022

Dear Members of the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you through this written testimony.

Thomas Paine is known as America's "forgotten Founder." The great Revolutionary writer and thinker is credited with having lit the spark that brought his fellow colonists to the cause of American independence.

His January 1776 pamphlet, *Common Sense*, was a runaway bestseller with an estimated 500,000 copies in circulation. Its arguments, written in direct prose, made the case that people should govern themselves and not be subjects to a monarchical leader. His call to American colonists was to envision a new way of life, one grounded in the ideals of the Enlightenment. To that end he wrote this challenge:

"We have it in our power to begin the world over again."


And with the help of those words we forged a nation.

John Adams is purported to have said, "Without the pen of the author of 'Common Sense,' the sword of [George] Washington would have been raised in vain."

Importantly as well, Paine was an early abolitionist. In his writings, Paine railed against the enslavement of Africans and the colony's despicable trade in human beings. He is a historical figure without an asterisk to his name. No need to justify his behavior relative to slavery as being a man of his time. Instead, Paine was a man ahead of his time.

Despite his unquestionable historical importance there is not a single statue commemorating Paine in the District of Columbia. H.R. 6720 would remedy that oversight. I hope you will support this bipartisan legislative effort.

Sincerely,



Robyn E. Blumner
President & CEO, Center for Inquiry
Vice President, Thomas Paine Memorial Association