

[if present] Chair Grijalva, Chair Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher - thank you for allowing me to speak to the subcommittee this morning.

My name is Ron Barber. I am the President of the January 8th Memorial Foundation Board and a former member of the House of Representatives.

It is an honor to be with you to discuss HR 250, the January 8th National Memorial Act. On behalf of our Board, I want to thank Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick for introducing this legislation and all members of the Arizona delegation for their support.

HR 250 will designate the January 8th Memorial as an affiliated area of the National Park Service and a “national” memorial. Due to the significance of the events in Tucson on January 8th, 2011 - this Memorial should become a national memorial. The tragic shooting that day shook our community and our nation. This designation will allow people from all across our country to know that it exists and what it stands for.

The construction of the Memorial has been completed. It was dedicated on January 8, 2021, the 10th anniversary of the shooting. The Memorial is located in El Presidio Park in Tucson, next to the Historic Pima County Courthouse, Pima County government and Tucson City Hall. Much consideration was given to its location and the Memorial Foundation Board approved its placement there because this is the center of civic life in Pima County.

On January 8th, 2011, Congresswoman Gabby Giffords was holding her 21st “Congress on Your Corner” outside a supermarket in Tucson. These were informal events where the Congresswoman would meet face to face with constituents to hear their concerns. Through “Congress on Your Corner” events, the Congresswoman brought government closer to the people and made herself accessible to her constituents.

Gabby was shot in the head and miraculously survived. I was shot alongside the Congresswoman and would have died had it not been for the fast response of shoppers and EMTs.

The Memorial honors the six people who were killed on that fateful day and those who were wounded and survived. It also is dedicated to the remarkable response from our community in the wake of this unspeakable tragedy. That outpouring of support showed the strength, resilience, and true spirit of Southern Arizonans. Our first responders saved many lives and the Memorial is dedicated to them as well.

Dorothy “Dot” Morris, Chief Federal Judge John Roll, nine-year-old Christina Taylor-Green, Phyllis Schneck, Dorwan Stoddard, and Gabriel “Gabe” Zimmerman were the fatal victims of the shooter, who came to assassinate Congresswoman Giffords.

The memorial includes tributes to each of those who died, as well as thirteen others who were wounded. Each person has a unique set of symbols on the interior wall of the Memorial. These symbols represent the interests and lives of those who died or were wounded. The memorial also includes symbols representing critical events in Tucson’s history, which show the City’s resilience and strength in the face of adversity.

The memorial's design was created in consultation with the relatives of victims as well as survivors. Input was received from the Tohono O'odham Nation, on whose ancestral land the Memorial is built. Groups affiliated with memorial statues located at the Presidio were also consulted. The Memorial was funded by donations from individuals, foundations and companies in Arizona.

The events of January 8th, 2011 should be remembered as a national tragedy, just as our community's response should be commemorated as a national point of pride.

The significance of this event - an attempted assassination of a sitting Member of Congress, the first ever death of a Congressional Staff person in the line of duty, the death of the Chief Judge of the Federal Court in Arizona, the death of a beautiful nine-year-old girl and the death of three senior citizens are too important not to memorialize at a national level.

Designating the January 8th National Memorial Site as an affiliated area of the National Park Service will not only elevate its status to that of national significance, but it will also increase its visibility, hopefully giving others across the country an opportunity to honor the victims and survivors of this horrific tragedy and see the strength of our community in its aftermath.

We were determined not to let the tragedy define us. What happened after the shooting and this Memorial define the compassion and caring that came to each of us from our community and contributed to our healing.

I look forward to answering your questions.