

GREETINGS

Chairwoman Haaland

Members of the Committee....

INTRODUCTION

I am Judith Young, a Gold Star Mother and a Past National President of the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. However, I appear before you today in my current position as Chair of the Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation (the **Foundation**) a 501(c)(3) organization.

WHY THE LEGISLATION IS CRITICALLY NEEDED

The Gold Star Mothers National Monument Foundation Inc. was formed in *2009* with the objective to erect a monument on an approved site with the National Capitol Region (the **NCR**) which will honor our Nation's Gold Star Mothers and Families.

In the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112-239, Section 2859), Congress authorized the monument to be located on Federal land within the National Capitol Region at no expense to the Federal government.

The current legislation that I am addressing today is House Resolution 2819 and Senate Resolution 1673 which will extend the authority for the establishment of a commemorative work in honor of Gold Star Families. The current legislation is necessary as the original timeline from the 2013 bill (PL 112-239) will expire in 2020. The additional seven-years' time afforded by these two resolutions is critical for the Foundation to be able to continue the efforts to establish the monument.

- Since the original legislation, the Foundation has diligently worked with several governmental agencies and commissions including the National Capitol Planning Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts, and the National Park Service to gain approval and to select an appropriate site. The Foundation has worked to complete all requirements of the Commemorative Act Process and is now in the final phase of acquiring design approval by the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA).
- Working closely with the National Parks Service (NPS), the Foundation conducted site analyses of five (5) potential locations for the monument within the NCR. These site analyses were conducted using established site selection criteria. The only site that met all criteria was a site on NPS property near the Arlington National Cemetery Visitors Center, which was therefore selected by the Foundation and subsequently approved by the NPS for the location of the monument.

Over the last few years we have been working to raise the necessary funding for the Monument which we estimate to be six million. Our efforts have included individuals, corporations, Veteran Service Organizations, and Gold Star Families, among others. Over the last four years we have raised over \$107,000 from four charity golf tournaments which, of course, will not build the monument but is essential for the Foundation to have operating funds. As of June 30th of this year, we have raised half a million toward the monument which is being used for payment to our architect for completing the necessary documents for the various committees and the hiring of AECOM to fulfill the regulatory requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). No Foundation member is reimbursed for any expenses that they might occur while serving. In addition over 100 letters, emails were sent in support of Site D at ANC.

We found that our fundraising approaches to major donors have been somewhat hampered by not having an approved design that would permit donors to visualize what their contribution would be going towards. That was one of the most asked questions. With the NPS approval of the site near Arlington National Cemetery we will be able to answer those donor concerns; and when we gain the structural design approval from the CFA we will be able to answer many of the other questions in the minds of donors. With an approved site and accepted design we will be able to provide prospective donors something substantive and not just a concept.

Some may ask: why do we need this monument? The monument will be a long-over-due tribute to honor all Mothers and Family Members who know the grief of losing a loved one in military service to our Nation. **The gift of these moms and their families were of such value that they can never be given again.** Our Nation's Gold Star Mothers and Families deserve a monument designed to relate and reflect "*their experience*" and that properly tells "*their story*" to the viewing public.

The legislation that is the topic of today is critical to the overall effort and is fundamental to making the Gold Star Families National Monument a reality.

I thank you for permitting me to appear today and I respectfully ask that this committee approve the Gold Star Families National Monument Extension Act.