

**STATEMENT OF JOHN G. PARSONS, ASSOCIATE REGIONAL DIRECTOR
FOR LANDS, RESOURCES, AND PLANNING, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, AND CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL CAPITAL
MEMORIAL COMMISSION, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL
PARKS, HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND RECREATION OF THE SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONCERNING S.
2231 AND H.R. 2879, BILLS TO PROVIDE FOR THE PLACEMENT AT THE
LINCOLN MEMORIAL OF A PLAQUE COMMEMORATING THE SPEECH
OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., KNOWN AS THE "I HAVE A DREAM"
SPEECH.**

April 27, 2000

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 2231 and H.R. 2879, similar bills to provide for the placement at the Lincoln Memorial of a plaque commemorating the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., known as the "I Have a Dream" speech.

The Administration supports commemorating Martin Luther King's speech at the Lincoln Memorial in an appropriate way. However, the Department of Interior recommends certain modifications to S. 2231 and H.R. 2879 to address the National Park Service's longstanding policy concerning plaques on important national memorials. This view, shared by the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts, would be addressed by the modifications we propose to the bill, providing the National Park Service with ample discretionary authority in the design and placement of the plaque.

The Lincoln Memorial stands as a symbol of the unification of the states and the healing of the nation after an enormously significant period in our history. The experience of this memorial is a carefully designed emotional sequence in which ascending the steps to the chamber stimulates a strong anticipatory feeling. While an ill-suited or ill-placed marker could blur the personal values that each visitor brings to and takes away from the memorial, a well-conceived and appropriately placed plaque could be compatible with

and actually enhance a visitor's experience. It should be noted, however, the National Park Service has already placed an exhibit within the ground level visitor area of the memorial that displays the events that have occurred here.

The proposed marker would honor a pivotal speech by Dr. King, which is viewed as the center point of the Civil Rights movement. Dr. King's speeches at this location in 1957, and again in 1963 contributed immensely to the civil rights movement. In addition, Dr. King's contribution to American history is recognized now by a national holiday, and will be further recognized by the pending memorial to "The Man – The Movement – The Mission," at the site on the Tidal Basin.

The proposal to place a plaque at the location of Dr. King's famous speech is not a new concept. It was in fact mentioned as an alternative in the discussions to commemorate Dr. King here in Washington, D.C., and would not have been appropriate as a suitable substitute to the memorial. The idea was rejected at the time, by the sponsors of the authorized memorial, the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, of which Dr. King was a member, because of their strong belief that Dr. King's achievement throughout the civil rights

movement was much more important than the marking of a singular event, however emotionally stirring or profound its impact on the generations of Americans who heard the speech.

The Lincoln Memorial and the figure of Abraham Lincoln is a shrine for all those who desire to capture the hearts and attention of the nation. The monumental space provides the setting to stir emotions about personal sacrifice, such as Mr. Lincoln's, in the preservation of the Union, as well as the sacrifices of the many who fought, died or were injured in the personal pronouncement of their inherent beliefs. We believe a suitably

designed and placed plaque in the area of the Memorial commemorating the “I have a Dream” speech could be made consistent with these important themes of the Memorial.

Attached are recommended modifications to the bill. We look forward to working with Congress on this legislation and our proposed modifications to this bill. That concludes my prepared testimony on S. 2231 and H.R. 2879, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Proposed amendment in the nature of a substitute for the placement at the Lincoln Memorial of a plaque commemorating the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr. known as the "I Have A Dream" speech.

A BILL

To provide for the placement at the Lincoln Memorial of a plaque commemorating the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., known as the "I Have A Dream" speech.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of
the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

SECTION 1. PLACEMENT OF PLAQUE AT LINCOLN MEMORIAL,

(a) PLACEMENT OF PLAQUE.--

(1) IN GENERAL.--The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to install in the area of the Lincoln Memorial in the District of Columbia a suitable plaque to commemorate the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., known as the "I Have A Dream" speech.

(2) RELATION TO COMMEMORATIVE WORKS ACT.--

The Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.) shall apply to the design and placement of the plaque within the area of the Lincoln Memorial.

(b) ACCEPTANCE OF CONTRIBUTIONS.--

(1) IN GENERAL.--The Secretary of the Interior shall accept contributions to pay the cost of preparing the plaque and installing the plaque and Federal funds may be used to

design, procure, or install the plaque.

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To provide for the placement at the Lincoln Memorial of a plaque commemorating the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., known as the 'I Have A Dream' speech. (Introduced in the Senate)

S 2231 IS

106th CONGRESS

2d Session

S. 2231

To provide for the placement at the Lincoln Memorial of a plaque commemorating the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., known as the 'I Have A Dream' speech.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

March 9, 2000

Mr. COVERDELL introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A BILL

To provide for the placement at the Lincoln Memorial of a plaque commemorating the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., known as the 'I Have A Dream' speech.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. PLACEMENT OF PLAQUE AT LINCOLN MEMORIAL.

(a) PLACEMENT OF PLAQUE-

(1) IN GENERAL- The Secretary of the Interior shall install on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in the District of Columbia a suitable plaque to commemorate the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., known as the 'I Have A Dream' speech.

(2) EXACT PLACEMENT- The plaque shall be placed at the location on the steps where Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered the 'I Have A Dream' speech on August 28, 1963.

(b) ACCEPTANCE OF CONTRIBUTIONS-

(1) IN GENERAL- The Secretary of the Interior may accept contributions to help pay the cost of preparing the plaque and installing the plaque on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial as required by subsection (a).

(2) FUNDS FOR PLAQUE- Amounts under paragraph (1) shall be credited to the appropriation supporting the maintenance and operation of the Lincoln Memorial.

Bill Summary & Status for the 106th Congress

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H.R.2879Sponsor: Rep Northup, Anne (introduced 9/15/1999)

Latest Major Action: 11/19/1999 Referred to Senate committee

Title: To provide for the placement at the Lincoln Memorial of a plaque commemorating the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., known as the "I Have A Dream" speech.

COSPONSORS(56), ALPHABETICAL [followed by Cosponsors withdrawn]: (Sort: by date)

<u>Rep Armey, Richard K.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Bonilla, Henry</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Brady, Robert</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Brown, Sherrod</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Carson, Julia</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Clayton, Eva M.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Cox, Christopher</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Cunningham, Randy (Duke)</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Dickey, Jay</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Engel, Eliot L.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Etheridge, Bob</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Fattah, Chaka</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Fletcher, Ernest L.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Foley, Mark</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Gibbons, Jim</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Gilchrest, Wayne T.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Greenwood, James C.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Gutknecht, Gil</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Hastert, J. Dennis</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Hastings, Alcee L.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Hayworth, J. D.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Hilliard, Earl F.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Hinchey, Maurice D.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Hoekstra, Peter</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Houghton, Amo</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Johnson, Eddie Bernice</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Jones, Stephanie Tubbs</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Kelly, Sue W.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Kolbe, Jim</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Lazio, Rick</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Leach, James A.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Manzullo, Donald A.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep McIntosh, David M.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep McKinney, Cynthia A.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Meeks, Gregory W.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Miller, Dan</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Moran, Jerry</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Morella, Constance A.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Owens, Major R.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Oxley, Michael G.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Pastor, Ed</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Pombo, Richard W.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Portman, Rob</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Sandlin, Max</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Schaffer, Bob</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Shays, Christopher</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Shimkus, John</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Spratt, John M., Jr.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Talent, James M.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Thomas, William M. (Bill)</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Thompson, Bennie G.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Tierney, John F.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Traficant, James A., Jr.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Watts, J. C., Jr.</u> - 9/15/1999
<u>Rep Wolf, Frank R.</u> - 9/15/1999	<u>Rep Wynn, Albert Russell</u> - 9/15/1999