

STATEMENT OF P. DANIEL SMITH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 3298, A BILL TO EXTEND THE AUTHORITY OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND, INC., TO ESTABLISH A VISITOR CENTER FOR THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL.

AUGUST 15, 2018

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 3298, a bill to extend the authority of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc. (Fund), to establish a visitor center for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The Department supports S. 3298, which would extend the authority for establishment of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial visitor center until 2022. The center's sponsors have obtained the appropriate approvals and should be given more time beyond the current expiration date of November 17, 2018, to continue raising the necessary funds to build the center.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial education center was authorized in 2003 through Public Law 108-126, and a site was identified that would place the visitor center underground northeast of the Lincoln Memorial and just west of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. To protect the integrity of the National Mall's iconic landscape, the National Park Service (NPS) and the Fund worked through extensive design considerations and reviews. This included the public consultation required under the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act as well as the review and approval by the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts required under the Commemorative Works Act. To date, all review requirements have been met and the visitor center design has been fully approved. The NPS has not yet issued a construction permit because the Fund has not yet raised the necessary funds to begin construction.

The visitor center authorization for establishment was extended in 2010 and 2014 with the Department's support. The Department supports the legislation and this effort to honor those who served and sacrificed in Vietnam, but it is important to note the significant costs we expect the NPS to incur once the center is constructed. During consideration of the 2010 visitor center extension, the Congressional Budget Office estimated an NPS outlay of \$2 million per year for the operation of the visitor center. We believe this figure would be substantially higher in today's dollars. All funding for the unit would be subject to National Park Service priorities and the availability of appropriations.

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