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**TESTIMONY OF JAMES P. BROWN, CITY OF ST. LOUIS
BEFORE THE NATIONAL PARKS SUBCOMMITTEE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
AND NATURAL RESOURCES
IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 1047
April 26, 2007**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify in support of HR. 1047, a bill authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating the Soldiers' Memorial Military Museum located in St. Louis, as a unit of the National Park Service. My name is James P. Brown and I am here representing the City of St. Louis. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay to thank both Senator Claire McCaskill and Representative William Lacy Clay for sponsoring this very important piece of legislation.

The Soldiers Memorial was built as a tribute to all veterans residing in the greater St. Louis area, including Southern Illinois. It has become a place of great solace for those veterans seeking peace and contact with their past, and a great source of inspiration and pride for those families whose sons and daughters made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. With American troops fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, landmarks that honor their service and the brave sacrifices made by veterans that came before them, are extremely important to the American people.

The St. Louis Soldiers' Memorial has a unique place in our nation's history. It is a national treasure created by one of the 20th Century's foremost Art Deco master, Walter Hancock. The architectural masterpiece was dedicated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on October 14, 1936, and is the only structure in St. Louis that is known to have been dedicated by a sitting U.S. President. Nobel features include the massive stone columns with carved stone panels between the columns that bear the faces of war veterans. On the north and south sides of the building are large stone statues of winged horses and martial looking men and women, representing the most important virtues in a soldier's life – COURAGE, LOYALTY, SACRIFICE AND VISION.

Originally built to honor the veterans of World War I, the St. Louis Soldier's Memorial occupies a seven-acre site in downtown St. Louis. It houses an extensive collection of priceless military artifacts that date back to the early 1800's. Today, the memorial has

become a cultural resource and gathering place. Every year, it attracts nearly 48,000 visitors and provides the setting for more than 20 ceremonies, including national patriotic events hosted by veterans groups, change of command ceremonies, and military retirement ceremonies. This monument is also the center of the annual Veterans Day parade and observance which is the largest of its kind in the Midwest, drawing more than 100 marching units from surrounding states.

The Soldiers' Memorial Military Museum is owned and maintained by the City of St. Louis. In 1923 the City of St. Louis voted \$6 million to purchase a Memorial Plaza and building dedicated to St. Louisans who lost their lives in World War I. The purchase of the seven-block site exhausted the allotted funding leaving no money to erect a monument. In 1933, Mayor Bernard F. Dickmann appealed to citizens and the city government to raise \$1 million for the construction of a memorial building and for general improvements of the Plaza area with assistance from the Relief Recovery Act. Construction of the Memorial began on October 21, 1935. On October 14, 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt officially dedicated the site. Mayor Dickmann opened the building to the public on Memorial Day, 1938.

It is a truly beautiful structure that is certainly among the most cherished monuments ever built in tribute to our nation's veterans. Every effort should be made to help ensure that this valuable landmark is preserved for the benefit of future generations. Federal designation as a monument under the administration of the National Park Service would guarantee the highest standards of historic preservation for all collections and unique architectural features. We believe that a feasibility study of the St. Louis Soldiers' Memorial undertaken by the Interior Department will show that it is a historically significant structure with national significance and it should become a part of the National Park Service.

Thank you for your consideration.