

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. 1152, A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR THE TRANSFER OF ADMINISTRATIVE JURISDICTION OVER CERTAIN PARCELS OF FEDERAL LAND IN ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

June 19, 2019

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. 1152, a bill to provide for the transfer of administrative jurisdiction over certain parcels of federal land in Arlington, Virginia, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 1152 with an amendment described later in this statement. The land transfer proposed in this bill, which involve Arlington National Cemetery and Memorial Avenue, were agreed to by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of the Army.

S. 1152 would transfer from the Secretary of the Interior to the Secretary of the Army administrative jurisdiction over approximately 16.09 acres of land adjacent to and encompassing Memorial Avenue from the western side of the Route 110 overpass, to and including the hemicycle at the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery. The bill would also transfer from the Secretary of the Army to the Secretary of the Interior administrative jurisdiction over approximately 1.04 acres of land within Arlington National Cemetery near Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial. That would add nearby wooded land and one historic building to the National Park Service buildings already under Department of the Interior jurisdiction. The exact acreage and land description of each transfer would be determined by a survey found to be satisfactory by both Secretaries. Recreational access and use of the bicycle trail in the parcels proposed for transfer would continue as currently authorized after the exchange.

The Department recognizes that the Department of the Army is well positioned to satisfy both the day-to-day and long-term maintenance needs of Memorial Avenue. In 2018, the deferred maintenance figure for Memorial Avenue was calculated at \$6.3 million.

Memorial Avenue and the hemicycle are components of the nationally significant, historic landscape that connects the Lincoln Memorial with Arlington National Cemetery. This grand design was envisioned by the 1901 Senate Park Commission - now commonly known as the McMillan Commission - as a way to promote closure and national healing in the aftermath of the Civil War. The Commission's plan called for a bridge and avenue that would visually connect the then proposed Lincoln Memorial with Arlington House located in the hills of Arlington National Cemetery. This connection would represent the symbolic and physical reunification of the North and the South.

Nearly three decades passed before the bridge and avenue were built, but their design bears the imprint of the McMillan Commission plan. The Memorial Avenue corridor - designed by the renowned architectural firm, McKim, Mead and White, was completed in 1932. It became, and continues to be, a monumental entryway to the Federal city and a formal, processional route to Arlington National Cemetery.

Memorial Avenue was constructed to perform an additional role as the “Avenue of Heroes.” Seven memorials have been placed along its length since 1960: the 101st Airborne Division Memorial, the Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, Jr. Memorial, the 4th Infantry Division Memorial, the Armored Forces Memorial, the Spanish-American War Veterans Memorial, the Seabees Memorial, and the Women in Military Service for America Memorial, which is located at the hemicycle. There are currently several niches open along the avenue to hold future memorials. The avenue is partly enclosed by a hedge of American holly and flanked by rows of white oak trees. These now-historic plantings date back to the original design and construction of the avenue. Memorial Bridge, Memorial Circle, Memorial Avenue, and the hemicycle are listed together on the National Register of Historic Places.

Today, Arlington Memorial Bridge, Memorial Avenue, the statuary, and the cemetery entrance look much as they were originally designed, and their historic integrity is high. The iconic viewshed between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington House has remained intact and unobstructed for more than a century, even as this now heavily used transportation corridor has been developed. The National Park Service relied on the established planning and design review process through the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission to accommodate the late 20th Century insertions of Highway 110 and the Metro’s Blue/Orange line, that now seamlessly pass unseen under the avenue. Any proposed changes or additions to the corridor would continue to require review by these commissions.

As currently written, S. 1152 would transfer Memorial Avenue from the hemicycle to the western side of the Route 110 overpass. In this regard, we note that the map referenced in Sec.1(a)(2) is not the map that we believe the sponsor intended to reference. A subsequent version of this map dated February 11, 2019, shows the correct boundary lines and acreage amounts of the National Park Service land that is meant to be transferred to the Department of the Army under this bill. We would be happy to provide the Committee with the newer map.

We also note that the National Park Service currently maintains a relationship with the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation as well as agreements with local governments that occupy or utilize the NPS lands proposed for transfer through easements or rights-of-way. The Department of the Army may need to assume aspects of these relationships once the land is under their jurisdiction. We are happy to work with the Army to address these issues through the transfer process.

Finally, the Arlington House, Robert E. Lee Memorial typically receives about 600,000 annual visitors, with 2016 being a banner year seeing over 1 million visitors to the site. The Memorial is also being rehabilitated thanks to a generous \$12.5 million donation and is expected to reopen to the public in the spring of 2020. The only visitor access to the Memorial is through Arlington National Cemetery. We would like to work with the Army to ensure that National Park Service staff and our contractors working on the site have unrestricted access to efficiently perform their stewardship duties and that future visitors will continue to have reliable access to the Memorial.

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