

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 284, A BILL TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO INCLUDE ON THE ENGRAVINGS ON THE TARAS SHEVCHENKO MEMORIAL IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA THE NAME OF VINCENT ILLUZZI, SR., WHO CARVED THE STATUE.

JUNE 21, 2023

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior’s views on S. 284, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to include on the engravings on the Taras Shevchenko Memorial in the District of Columbia the name of Vincent Illuzzi, Sr., who carved the statue.

S. 284 would require the Secretary of the Interior to include the name of Vincent Illuzzi, Sr., on the Taras Schevenko Memorial (Memorial), at an appropriate location near the names of the sculptor and architect of the Memorial. The bill references Illuzzi as the carver of the statue; Illuzzi carved the stone elements of the Memorial but not the bronze statue. The names of the sculptor and architect of the Memorial are part of the original Memorial.

Authorized by Public Law 86-749 in 1960 and dedicated in 1964, the Memorial honors the 19th Century Ukrainian poet laureate and artist whose works captured the fight against oppression, slavery, and exploitation of the Ukrainian people. Shevchenko opposed the occupation of his native land by Russian imperial and colonial rule and championed national independence. The Memorial is located in the park administered by the National Park Service at 22nd Street, P Street, and Florida Avenue, Northwest, newly named “Ukrainian Independence Park” by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law 117-328).

Upon completion of any commemorative work on land administered by the National Park Service (NPS) in the District of Columbia and its environs, the NPS assumes responsibility for maintaining the memorial as a completed work of commemorative art. Altering an established commemorative work requires an act of Congress.

While Congress has authorized modifications to completed commemorative works in the past, the modifications have usually been enhancements of the commemorative content of the memorials. For example, Congress authorized a plaque commemorating the “I Have a Dream” speech made by Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1963, which was installed many years later on the step on the Lincoln Memorial where he made the famous speech. The Department is aware of only one instance in which Congress authorized the modification of a commemorative work in the Nation’s Capital to acknowledge an artistic contributor to that work—that was for the esteemed photographer Joe Rosenthal, who captured the flag-raising moment on Iwo Jima that inspired the sculptor of the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial. Modification of the Taras Shevchenko Memorial acknowledgements would likely invite additional similar requests.

Historical records documenting the Memorial's establishment, including the dedication ceremony program, Federal commission reviews for the memorial design, and other documents do not mention Mr. Illuzi's contributions or do so only in a cursory manner that would not warrant mention in the Memorial acknowledgements. The NPS is willing to consider alternative methods, such as interpretive and educational content in park websites, waysides, and other materials, that would acknowledge other Memorial contributors in the context of providing additional information about the story of the Memorial's establishment. These interpretive and educational materials are not commemorative works, and thus do not require Congressional authorization.

For these reasons, the Department does not support this bill. Should the Committee decide to move forward with this legislation, the Department would recommend that the bill be amended to name a memorial sponsor and prohibit the use of Federal funds for the proposed alteration. The 1960 law authorizing establishment of the Memorial stated that the statue would be erected without expense to the United States, as is consistent with most commemorative work authorizations. Legislation authorizing the establishment or modification of memorials typically prohibits the use of Federal funds to pay for any expense related to the establishment of the commemorative work and identifies a memorial sponsor that will provide the necessary funds to complete the project. S. 284 as introduced does not identify a sponsor for that purpose.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or any other members of the Subcommittee have.