July 10, 1984

Task Force on Libraries and Memorials
Committee on House Administration
103 House Annex 1
Washington, DC 20515

Please accept the enclosed statement for the record in the Public Hearing on HR 2205, conducted by the House Task Force on Libraries and Memorials, at 1:00 PM, July 10, 1985, Room 304, Cannon House Office Building.

JOHN F.C. KENNEY, JR.
President, NCKWM
BEFORE THE
TASK FORCE ON LIBRARIES AND MEMORIALS
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

Madam Chair, Members of the Task Force:

My name is John Kenney and I am President of the National Committee for the Korean War Memorial.

On behalf of our organization I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify on HR 2205 which addresses the establishment of a memorial in the Nation's Capital to honor members of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in the Korean War.

The idea of establishing a Korean War Memorial dates back at least as far as the mid-1960's when the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) was seeking an appropriation of funds to erect the memorial. At that time the request was turned down because of the high cost of prosecuting the war in Viet Nam. More recent attempts by the ABMC have been turned down because of concern for budget deficits.

The most recent effort to establish a memorial by a non-profit organization in the private sector had its genesis in August, 1979.

At that time, Ms. Chayon Kim, a Korean-born U.S. citizen who recalls her early childhood with memories of huddling in a bunker while American B-29s dropped bombs on North Korean troops all around her hiding place -- and who was the first curator of the 2d U.S. Infantry Division Museum, Camp Howze, Korea -- was involved in coordination of a luncheon in New York for officials of the Korean Veterans Association, members of the press, and some American veterans of the Korean War. As a part of this affair, Ms. Kim also arranged for and participated in a conference with Mrs. Douglas MacArthur and the Korean Veterans Association officials. At the end of the month a letter from Mrs. MacArthur inspired Ms. Kim with the idea of establishing a Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

After two years of investigation and study into the means of establishing a memorial in Washington, she moved to this city and set out on her mission. She visited the ABMC, the offices of the Capital Region of the National Park Service, and the Superintendent of Records and Deeds of the District of Columbia to get the information she needed to get started on her project. In November, 1981, she enlisted the aid of two new-found acquaintances to act as co-incorporators on a non-profit organization she chose to call -- the National Committee for the Korean War Memorial. Today, the original organization is known as the Korean War Memorial, Inc.

Ms. Kim is now an incorporator, director, and Secretary and Treasurer, of a new National Committee for the Korean War Memorial which has as its objective the establishment of a memorial to honor and commemorate the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces of the United States and its twenty-one allied nations who fought under the banner of the United Nations to preserve the independence of the Republic of Korea from Communist domination. I serve as President of the new organization.

We are not here today to discuss the differences between the two organizations.
We are here to add our voice to the idea that the time has come to re-examine approaches to the establishment of a memorial that everyone agrees is long overdue. As we look at the past we find that two basic approaches can be defined.

- Establish the memorial through the action of a governmental agency (e.g., American Battle Monuments Commission) using funds appropriated by the Congress for that purpose.

- Establish the memorial through the action of a private institution using funds collected by public subscription.

Both of these approaches have been used in the past: the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial Commission is chartered by the Congress to establish a memorial to a great President; the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial was successfully established using contributions and donations from all over the land; the Marine Corps Memorial and the memorials to the Sea Bees and the First and Second Infantry Divisions are examples of memorials which were, for the most part, funded by the members of the organizations they represent.

The idea of a Korean War Memorial has been so long delayed in coming, however, that it has no a dedicated following, like a unit organization or a generation of young people highly motivated to commemorate their comrades who died in a war nobody understood. The Korean War Memorial has as its objective preserving the memory of the service and sacrifice of people who fought in a war which began thirty-five years ago, and many of those who served in that war are not fully convinced that there will ever be a memorial to their service any more than there were parades to welcome them home in 1953. Therefore, if there is to be memorial for them, the effort to see it established must be provided by a surrogate organization dedicated to the successful completion of the task.

In November, 1981, it appeared that the best approach was to develop an organization in the private sector which would obtain its support from public subscriptions. So far, for a number of reasons, that approach has not worked.

Today, the best approach to the problem is to turn the project over to a governmental agency and provide that organization with the resources to get the job done.

One of the two bills recently introduced in the House assigns the task to the American Battle Monuments Commission, and that is an excellent choice. It is a Federal agency staffed with experienced military officers, and for them, the establishment of a Korean War Memorial will become a defined mission to be accomplished in a professional manner by professional personnel. Even if the ABMC staff must be augmented to encompass the new task, the administrative costs of establishing the memorial will be far less than those associated with supporting a comparable administrative structure in the private sector. Also, as a Federal agency, the American Battle Monuments Commission is subject to reviews and audits accomplished by the General Accounting Office. There can be no question as to accountability and responsibility for accomplishment of the task.

Having settled on the appropriateness of selecting the American Battle Monuments Commission as the agency best suited to the task, let us turn to the
provision of resources. Congress has the authority to enact legislation to provide sufficient funding for the establishment of the memorial. Such an action is inherent in the assignment of the task to that agency. However, in these times of concern over mounting Federal budget deficits, this action can also bring an unfavorable response from the American public over what could be perceived as an unnecessary expense.

The selection of the American Battle Monuments Commission as the agency to establish a Korean War Memorial provides a unique opportunity to address this problem as well.

The enabling legislation which establishes the American Battle Monuments Commission also allows the commission to accept donations and subscriptions from the private sector which can be used to defray expenses which would normally be met with appropriated funds. Therefore, the possibility exists that Congress might be placed in the position of merely underwriting the initial expenses of a memorial which could, in the long run, be paid for, in full, by donations and subscriptions from the American public.

The greatest advantage of this approach to providing resources for this task is not only that it provides for public financing and accountability, but also it gives the American people the opportunity to participate personally and directly in the cause. There are already five donations, totaling eighty dollars, residing in a Korean War Memorial account established by the American Battle Monuments Commission. Who can say how much that account can grow if the American people take this task to heart?

All we have to do is to let them know that the goal to establish a Korean War Memorial in the Nation's Capital is alive and well and in good hands, and they will do the rest.

Who will tell them? The President of the United States when he signs the enabling legislation into law; 535 Members of Congress in their constituent newsletters; the national veterans' associations and their local affiliates through their national and local publications; the members of the press, who never miss a good story; radio and television outlets in public service announcements, and other good-hearted citizens who will contact their friends and tell them about the project.

The brunt of the burden of rallying public support should be borne by the organizations whose raison d'être is representing the best interests of those who have served in the armed forces of this nation, the national veterans organizations. Working together with the American Battle Monuments Commission and providing the impetus for the long overdue recognition for those who served in Korea War and their families could be their finest hour in this decade. It is a challenge they should not refuse.

I urge this task force to go forward with a favorable recommendation for the passage of HR 2205, the Korean War Memorial Act of 1985.

Thank you for this opportunity.