OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES J. FLORIO

Task Force on Libraries & Memorials
July 10, 1985

I would like to begin by thanking the Chair of the Task Force, Ms. Oakar, for all of the assistance and support which she has given to our efforts. And I do say our efforts as my distinguished colleague from Ohio is herself a cosponsor of H.R. 2205, The Korean War Memorial Act. On behalf of both Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Hammerschmidt, the original cosponsors of the bill, and the over one hundred other Members who have cosponsored the bill since its introduction, I thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Madam Chair, I see from the witness list that the veterans organizations are represented here today as well they should be. Certainly there are no finer representatives of the over five million Korean era veterans than these groups. To describe the brutality and intensity of a war that lasted only 36 months and yet cost nearly the same number of American lives lost in the ten-year Vietnam conflict is something perhaps better left to those who were there. Suffice it to say that it is my opinion, and that of many others as well, that the sacrifices of these brave young servicemen have gone unnoticed, unrecognized and unknown for far too long.

Since I introduced this bill with Messrs. Montgomery and Hammerschmidt last April I have received numerous letters of support from Korean War veterans. I thank the veterans service organizations for their efforts in getting the word out to their members regarding the bill. I would like to share some excerpts from some of the letters which I have received. Madam Chair, I would like to ask that these letters be included in the record in their entirety.

"It was an honored privilege to be given the command assignment in Korea. I wish to endorse enthusiastically the proposed H.R. 2205, initiated by you and the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, for the erection and maintenance by the Federal Government of a memorial to honor the members of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in the Korean War. I believe this is an honor richly deserved and long overdue."

-- Matthew B. Ridgway, General, U.S. Army Retired

"You wholeheartedly have my support for the Korean War Memorial Act. It has always seemed somewhat unjust that there is no memorial dedicated to the memory of those courageous Americans who lost their lives in this war. All of us who fought in Korea remember with sadness that we were caught up in a so-called 'policing action' but those who were fighting there called it a war. The Marines I flew with had a very sarcastic phrase about the Korean War, 'It's not the best war but it's the only one we've got!' If I can be of any other help in showing my support for the
forgotten veterans please let me know."

— Ed McMahon, The Tonight Show
Johnny Carson Productions

"My years in the U.S. Marine Corps which I spent in Korea were years of
sacrifices and pain for many Americans. Too often, I think, we are con-
cerned with those who actually fought in combat and the need to honor
their courage and bravery. There was no shortage of heroes in Korea.
But we can't forget those at home either. We as a country were fighting
in Korea — and we as a country suffered in Korea. By honoring those who
fought in Korea we honor this entire country which did in fact preserve
freedom in those years. I am confident that any veteran of the Korean
War would support this measure, H.R. 2205, The Korean War Memorial Act.
Thank you for your efforts to remember the dedication of our people over
thirty years ago."

— Ted Williams

I would like to thank General Ridgway, Ed McMahon and Ted Williams for
their letters of support. I am gratified to see that significant interest has
been generated about this proposal and I am hopeful that the Task Force will
concur with our efforts.

Madam Chair, I would like to draw your attention to language which I
would propose to be used to amend H.R. 2205, The Korean War Memorial Act, to
make it an even better bill. The language has been forwarded to the Task
Force already and I would like to summarize it briefly.

The language would require that the American Battle Monuments Commission
(ABMC) construct the memorial. ABMC is staffed by U.S. Army personnel and,
in fact, the Veterans Affairs Committee has oversight responsibility for its
operation. It has a proven track record and I am sure that Col. Ryan of the
Commission, who will testify today, will be able to answer any questions you
may have about the ABMC.

The Commission has an existing provision in its federal charter which
allows it to accept private, tax-deductible donations for its operations. I
have suggested wording which would specifically reinforce that provision and
expressly permit donations to the Commission for the purpose of building the
memorial. We have asked for federal funds not to exceed $5 million. Any
funds collected by the Commission would be used to defray the cost to the
government. Monies would actually be returned to the Treasury as donations
were made to the project. It is possible that the actual cost to the govern­
ment would be quite small, if any, as more and more veterans learn of this
mechanism.

There are many people here today to whom I am grateful — certainly the
guidance which Chairman Montgomery and Mr. Hammerschmidt have offered to me
and my staff has been invaluable. Senator Glenn, your presence here today
provides a focus for this proposal. Your exploits and courage are well known to all Americans and I thank you for your support. Mr. Evans and the Vietnam Veterans in Congress provide a link between the men and women who fought in both wars and their help has been a great asset. Mr. Parris has generated considerable public support for his own initiative to honor the Korean War veteran and I am grateful for both his support and his presence here today.

The time is now, Madam Chair, for a Korean War Memorial. We have the support of veterans nationwide and we have the support of well over one hundred Members of Congress. I thank you for your leadership, as demonstrated by holding these hearings, and I ask for your continued support. The veterans of the Korean War and their families thank you for your effort.