Congress lifts last obstacle to Korean War memorial

WASHINGTON — Congress on Wednesday removed the final obstacle to the construction of a long-planned memorial to honor the 50,000 Americans who were killed fighting the Korean War.

In a unanimous vote, the House granted permission for the memorial to be established on the Mall in Washington, waiving a 1986 law that bars the construction of any additional monuments in that area. The Senate took a similar vote last year.

"It is a fitting and perhaps overdue memorial to the 55,000 men and women who lost their lives in that forgotten war," said Rep. James J. Florio, D. N.J., who sponsored the legislation.

The commission already has raised $2.5 million and plans to raise a total of $5 million for the memorial. No design plans or specific sites for the memorial have been selected.

Gen. Richard Stilwell, who commanded the U.S. troops in Korea and is a member of the 12-member board responsible for raising funds for the project and planning its design, said the memorial will be “inspirational in message and timeless in meaning.”

About 5.7 million Americans served in Korea between 1950 and 1953. About 55,000 were killed, 100,000 were wounded and 8,000 were listed as missing in action.

Rep. Stan Parris, R. Va., a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee who was a fighter jet pilot in Korea, noted that the Korean War is often overlooked as one of the country’s major military conflicts. But Parris said “the forgotten war is not forgotten for those of us who served there.”

Florio said that the Vietnam memorial has shown the importance of war memorials. "Not only do they honor those who never came home, but they offer a place where veterans, their families, and future generations can come and reflect," he said.

Grief for slain racer

Collene Thompson Campbell, sister of auto speed king Mickey Thompson, is comforted by family friend Ernie Alvarado after their arrival at the racer’s home in Bradbury, Calif. Thompson and his wife, Trudy, were slain early Wednesday in what authorities call an assassination.