

STATEMENT OF JANET SNYDER MATTHEWS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 452, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CONDUCT A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE SUITABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNATING THE SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL MILITARY MUSEUM LOCATED IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, AS A UNIT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

November 10, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 452, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating the Soldiers' Memorial Military Museum located in St. Louis, Missouri, as a unit of the National Park System.

The Department opposes enactment of this legislation. While it is an architecturally beautiful structure, the St. Louis Soldiers' Memorial (Memorial) is not distinguished beyond that of many other war memorials in cities all over the United States. The Memorial is currently listed as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, but at this time has not been nominated. Therefore, it is not known whether it meets the criteria for national significance, which is the minimum standard a memorial must meet for inclusion in the National Park System. Finally, in a time of tight budgets and a refocusing on the core mission of the National Park Service, we believe that funding should be directed toward completing previously authorized studies. Currently, 25 studies are in progress. We hope to complete and transmit six to Congress by the end of 2005.

The Soldiers' Memorial is a tribute to and a cultural resource center for all veterans located in the greater St. Louis area, including southern Illinois. In 1923, the residents of St. Louis voted to purchase a memorial plaza and construct a memorial to commemorate the citizens of St. Louis who lost their lives in World War I. A seven-block site was purchased and the construction of the Soldiers' Memorial began on October 21, 1935. President Franklin D. Roosevelt officially dedicated the site on October 14, 1936 and the building was opened to the public on Memorial Day in 1938. H.R. 452 would authorize a study of the Soldiers' Memorial Military Museum at 1315 Chestnut Street in the greater St. Louis area to determine its eligibility to become a unit of the National Park System. The study would be conducted in accordance with the criteria contained in Section 8 (c) of Public Law 91-383 (16 U.S.C. 1a-5(c)).

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or the committee may have.