

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 25, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

The National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia holds a special importance to all Americans, and tells a compelling and important story. In 1996, through the National Defense Authorization Act for FY1997 (Public Law 104-201), Congress designated Bedford as the location of the National D-Day Memorial. Recognizing the importance of this Memorial to our nation, we introduced legislation earlier this month to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, as a unit of the National Park System (S. 1207, H.R. 2689). This legislative effort is ongoing, but with increasingly difficult economic prospects in the future, we write today to offer an additional alternative remedy to safeguard the future of this proud memorial.

Bedford, a small town of 3,200 residents, proportionally suffered the most severe losses of any community in America during the D-Day invasion, losing 21 of the 35 Company A soldiers who participated in the landings. The Memorial exists in tribute to the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice of the Allied Forces on D-Day and the enormous contributions of our small towns to the war effort and attracts a diverse population of more than 100,000 visitors during an average year, most of them visiting from out of state. The Memorial is located in the shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains, near U.S. Interstate 81 and constructed upon a consecrated mixture of sand from Omaha Beach and farm dirt from Bedford.

Despite its beauty and historic significance, the Memorial faces significant challenges. With expenses of approximately \$2.2 million per year, and revenue of less than \$1 million, it is facing financial difficulties and will likely be forced to shutter its doors absent significant federal assistance.

The President is authorized pursuant to 16 USC 431 to declare by public proclamation historic landmarks and structures situated on lands owned or controlled by the United States to be national monuments. The law further provides that when such landmarks or structures are situated on private lands, the landmark or structures may be relinquished to the federal government for their proper management and upkeep. In our

view, this provision of federal law provides an effective alternative to achieve our stated goal: preservation of this important and significant monument to the Americans who were lost on Omaha Beach. We have been assured that local authorities and the National D-Day Memorial Foundation stand willing to cede control of the Memorial for this purpose.

We hope you will work with the President to designate the Bedford site as the National D-Day Monument. This would enable the Department of the Interior to promote and maintain the D-Day Monument through the National Park Service, and reduce the operating and overhead expenses. The local communities sacrificed greatly during World War II, and in our view now strongly deserve both this recognition and support.

We appreciate your attention and consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Nemes

Tom Puller

Bob Goodlatte

Rick Boucher

Greg Hoke

Jim Webb

Billy Swann

Shirley

Jim Moran

Kenneth E. Tompkins