

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bill

*Remarks on Signing S.J. Res. 119
Into Law. July 1, 1980*

THE PRESIDENT. Since I've been living in the White House and working in the Oval Office, I've known of very few unanimous resolutions or actions by the United States Senate. But it's especially fitting that this resolution and the effort to provide a suitable memorial for those who fought and died for our Nation during the Vietnam war, should have such broad and bipartisan support.

My wife, Rosalynn, for instance, has joined as one of the cochairpersons, with many others, on the sponsoring committee of the Vietnam Memorial Fund.

I particularly want to acknowledge the dedication of Jan Scruggs who began this effort formally, after years of preliminary work, in April of 1979, and the leadership of Senator Mathias, Senator Warner, Congressmen Bonior and Daschle and Chairman Bumpers and Chairman Nedzi and Congressman Hammerschmidt and many others who led the legislation successfully through the Congress.

I also want to congratulate and thank Secretary Cecil Andrus, who couldn't be here today, but whose agency supported and whose department will be responsible for the management and the maintenance of this monument; and for the Veterans Administration, Max Cleland, who will speak to us in a few minutes, whose service to his country has continued since that war through today, and who joyfully celebrates his own "alive day" each year, because he knows better than most of us what it means to sacrifice and to serve and to suffer and to survive.

A long and a painful process has brought us to this moment today. Our Nation, as you all know, was divided by

this war. For too long we tried to put that division behind us by forgetting the Vietnam war and, in the process, we ignored those who bravely answered their Nation's call, adding to their pain the additional burden of our Nation's own inner conflict.

Over the last 3½ years, I have encouraged and I have been heartened to witness an enormous change in the attitude of Americans toward those who served in Vietnam. A Nation healing and reconciliation is a good sight to behold from the viewpoint of the Presidency, and we are ready at least to acknowledge more deeply and also more publicly the debt which we can never fully pay to those who served.

The word "honor" has been used so often and sometimes so carelessly—especially in public ceremonies—that there's a danger that it might lose its meaning. More importantly, we might forget what its true meaning is and, with it, the concept of duty and a standard of behavior and sense of humility that's precious and also irreplaceable. And when I say today that I am honored to be able to sign this resolution into law, I use that word with great care.

This is an important step toward the establishment of a permanent memorial for the young men and women who died in the service of our country in Vietnam: for those who, despite all our efforts, are still missing in Southeast Asia; and for all those who served and returned. We are honored to have a small part in offering this overdue recognition. They honored us and their country with their service, and no delay in recognizing them can lessen the value of their personal sacrifice.

Perhaps even more than those who served, our Nation needs this memorial as a reminder of what happened in the past, what was lost, and our need to learn from our experience. We need it also as a physical place where we can pay tribute

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to those young lives, what they meant, to kind of place apart, to recall the meaning of the word "honor", so that the word can retain all its simple and austere grandeur.

In honoring those who answered the call of duty, we do not honor war. But we honor the peace they sought, the freedoms that they fought to preserve, and the hope that they held out to a world that's still struggling to learn how to settle differences among people and among nations without resorting to violence.

All of us must be willing to sacrifice to protect freedom and to protect justice, but we are not called upon to sacrifice equally. In every war there are some who are called on to make the ultimate sacrifice of their own lives. Some come home with bodies that must bear daily pain for the rest of their lives. A tragically large number were still missing when the war in Vietnam was over, and we'll continue to exert the fullest possible effort to account for all those who are still missing.

It's a pointless act of inhumanity and cruelty to prolong the vigil of those who love, waiting for those for so many years, and it's a vigil that's shared not just among the families directly, but shared by all Americans.

At the time of our White House reception in honor of Vietnam veterans last year, Phil Caputo, the author of "A Rumor of War", permitted me to read from his book. I was greatly moved by this passage, as were the others at the time, and I feel it even more appropriate to read here today the same words, what Caputo wrote in 1976, I believe, about the death of one of his close friends named Walter Levy, who was killed in Vietnam trying to save a fellow soldier, and I quote:

"So much was lost with you, so much talent and intelligence and decency. You were the first from our class of 1964 to

die. There were others, but you were the first and more: you embodied the best that was in us. You were a part of us, and a part of us died with you, the small part that was still young, that had not yet grown cynical, grown bitter and old with death. Your courage was an example to us, and whatever the rights or wrongs of the war, nothing can diminish the rightness of what you tried to do. Yours was the greater love. You died for the man you tried to save, and you died *pro patria*. It was not altogether sweet and fitting, your death, but I am sure you died believing it was *pro patria*. You were faithful."

To die for one's country is a sacrifice that should never be forgotten.

Caputo goes on to say that our country has not matched the faithfulness of that war hero, because our country tried to forget the war; that 11 years after his friend's death, Caputo wrote, there were no monuments, no statues, no plaques, no memorials, because such symbols would make it harder to forget.

I didn't read that part aloud last year. Now, we'll build a memorial to the Walter Levys who died on the other side of the world, sacrificing themselves for others, sacrificing themselves for us and for our children and for our children's children. With this memorial we will say with Caputo: "We loved you for what you were and what you stood for." We will prove with this monument that we care, and that we will always remember.

I'd now like to ask Max Cleland, the director [Administrator] of our Veterans Administration, one of the finest men I know, a long-time personal friend of mine, to say a few words.

Max Cleland.

MR. CLELAND. Mr. President, thank you very much. Those words of Caputo have a special meaning for me. I consider myself fortunate to have survived Viet-

nam and survived the aftermath back in this country. It's a special honor to be here on a day of celebration and a day of recognition. As a Vietnam veteran myself, I want to thank those who have made this day possible, those citizens, those Members of the Congress, and you, Mr. President, for this recognition.

I think it does say that we do honor those who have honored us. And I'd like to invite all of you to get better acquainted with Constitution Gardens, on behalf of Cecil Andrus and myself. We look forward to that as a site for a memorial that will say to all Vietnam veterans and their families: This Nation cares, and we remember.

Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT. And now I will sign the resolution into law, following which, without further introduction, I'd like to ask Senator Mac Mathias to speak to us, and also then Congressman Nedzi.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

SENATOR MATHIAS. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for the act you have just performed, and for your very touching words. The President has been very generous in giving credit for the passage of this act. I want you to know that as far as the United States Senate is concerned, the labor and the honor has been very equally divided in 101 different parts. I say, Mr. President, 101, because not only did every single Member of the Senate cosponsor this legislation, which is unusual in itself, but we've had the untiring help and assistance of the Secretary of the Senate, Sam Kimmett, who has been a very big part of the passage of the legislation.

I believe the President's signature on this legislation, and the votes of approval, the unanimous votes of approval in the Congress, are an outward and visible sign

of the reconciliation of this great country after a difficult war; an outward and visible sign that we now have the perspective on Vietnam which makes it possible for us to resolve the differences that divided us during that war.

I undertook the initial sponsorship of this legislation because of the obvious sincerity, the moving dedication, of the Vietnam veterans who first came to see me about it, and because of the sense of debt that I felt for those who, as a great man who lived in this house once said, "gave the last full measure of devotion." But it's a cause in which so many people can participate, not just those who originally thought of the idea, not just those who helped to get the bill through Congress, not those of us who are limited by the confines of this garden, but all Americans can play a role, can participate, can play a part. And this is the time when we invite everyone to become a part of this living Vietnam memorial.

Thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE NEDZI. *Mr. President, my colleagues in the Congress, Vietnam veterans and their friends—and I know that includes everybody here:*

It's truly an honor for me to represent the House of Representatives at this signing. I recognize that the moving force—as Senator Mathias has so eloquently stated—behind this resolution was the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Incorporated. However, many Members of the House and the Senate also worked very diligently on it. The House Memorial Subcommittee, which I chair, happened by legislative chance to have a role to play, and we were very, very pleased to play it.

A former President once said: "Doing the right thing is easy. Knowing what the right thing is is hard." All Members of

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the House, I am sure, want to do the right thing in regard to Vietnam veterans. And while many of us realize that we will probably be unable to fully groove on the attitudes and experience of the Vietnam-era veteran, we do want to try. And I believe the Capital and the Nation will be well served by the initiative and the creativity of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, particularly the tone in which this whole enterprise was undertaken. Thanks largely to them, a harmonious and unifying memorial will arise out of what was a generally disharmonious period of our national history.

The memorial is a creative, finely honed, high-minded, and encompassing idea. It is sensitive to the individual dignity of the men and women who served, and to the very American impulses of kinship, conscience, love, hope, and faith. When fully realized, and it will be fully realized, this memorial will serve as an enduring beacon of national appreciation and national reconciliation.

Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT. In closing this ceremony, let me say that this is a wonderful occasion for us all: a time of sober reflection and a time of the realization of the blessings that we share; a time of hope and expectation about the future, with a united and a strong America, realizing the true meaning of honor, the true meaning of bravery, and the true meaning of sacrifice.

As requested by the Vietnam veterans themselves, this memorial will not be financed by Federal funds; it'll be financed by contributions from all Americans. After it is completed, the Federal Government, of course, will operate it, under the Interior Department. And it will be designed for all Americans to come to express our gratitude for what our Na-

tion is and our deep thanks and appreciation for the courage and the sacrifice of those who have given their lives on occasion, but offered their lives even when they weren't lost, for the preservation of liberty and hope.

Thank you very much. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:05 p.m. at the ceremony in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vietnam veteran Jan C. Scruggs, a founding member and president/director of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc., a non-profit, charitable organization which is gathering contributions for the building of the memorial.

As enacted, S.J. Res. 119 is Public Law 96-297, approved July 1.

Implementation of the International Sugar Agreement

Executive Order 12224. July 1, 1980

By the authority vested in me as President of the United States of America by an Act providing for the Implementation of the International Sugar Agreement, 1977, and for Other Purposes P.L. 96-236: 94 Stat. 336 and Section 301 of Title 3 of the United States Code, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1-101. The functions vested in the President by Public Law 96-236 (94 Stat. 336) are delegated to the United States Trade Representative.

1-102. In carrying out the functions delegated to him, the United States Trade Representative shall consult with the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of State. The United States Trade Representative may, with the consent of the head of another Executive agency, redele-