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opportunity to express our views and to urge you to approve today the proposal presented.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

Next Mr. Joseph E. Miller representing the American Legion.

MR. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission of Fine Arts, I am Joseph E. Miller. I am Assistant Legislative Director of the National American Legion.

Our comments, like many comments referred to here today, are positive.

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to present our views concerning the proposed statue design and the flagpole for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

For two years, the Legion has been firmly committed to the memorial and opposed to efforts which would seek to delay its construction and dedication. To achieve this, \$1 million was donated by members of the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliaries from all across the Nation. This \$1 million did not come from a few individuals but rather from small donations averaging less than \$9.

Today, the American Legion's support for this worthwhile project continues undiminished and extends to the

sculpture designed by Mr. Hart. We recognize that there are those who oppose the statue's design and its inclusion as a part of the memorial. But memorials and controversy are not new to Washington. Eight months ago, in order to bring an end to the debate, supporters and opponents of the basic design met to determine whether certain modifications could be agreed upon which would satisfy the opponents while protecting the basic design and integrity.

Agreement was reached and the modification package was subsequently approved in concept by this Commission. With these actions already taken, we believe that the only question remaining is whether the statue submitted for consideration meets the design modification criteria. In our opinion, the answer is yes. Others, of course, may choose to evaluate the artistic qualities of Mr. Hart's sculpture, but their arguments will always be debatable. We are not critics, we are veterans, and can only express our support for the process in which the basic design and modifications were selected.

We believe it important to reemphasize the American Legion's commitment to the memorial project. That commitment goes beyond our financial contribution. As an organization with 700,000 Vietnam veterans, we are emotionally committed to

the completion of this project at the earliest possible time.

We have participated actively in this endeavor during the past two years. We attended the marathon sessions held earlier this year to resolve the conundrum created by those who saw the basic design as a symbol which depersonalized the war and failed to recognize those who served in the war. We listened to all the arguments, and our support for the memorial remained steadfast. However, in an effort to accommodate the opinions of several recognized spokesmen of the Vietnam experience, we agreed to the modifications which addressed their concerns.

We expressed our commitment to the process by which those modifications would be selected. That commitment remains firm and we are here to advise the Commission that we support the selection of Mr. Hart's submittal, as well as the flagpole. It does provide a human element to the basic contemplative design, the combination of which creates a dignified and eloquent tribute to those who served in Vietnam. We have heard and will hear many opinions regarding how best to honor Vietnam veterans and how best to select designs for public art and public monuments. Yet, we are convinced that no matter how sincere the effort, perfection in method and design will continue to be elusive. The crucial fact is that

this memorial is for and about Vietnam veterans.

Therefore, the American Legion urges this Commission to approve the design modifications which have been submitted for its consideration. We further urge that an approval decision be rendered today.

Mr. Chairman, the preceding statement has been wholeheartedly endorsed by the Amvets, NCO Association, National Association for Uniformed Services and the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, representatives of which are in the audience now. The endorsers represent over 575,000 members, 175,000 of which are Vietnam veterans. When combined with the membership of the American Legion, these organizations represent the views of 3.2 million war-time veterans, 925,000 of which served during the Vietnam era.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

Next will be Mr. Morgan S. Ruph, Amvets.

MR. RUPH: Mr. Chairman, I am Morgan S. Ruph of Amvets.

On behalf of our 200,000 member organization, we express to you our appreciation for the opportunity to come before you today to present our views on the proposed