

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

Next is R. Jack Powell, Executive Director of the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

MR. POWELL: Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, it is a pleasure to be here this afternoon.

I noticed as I came in that 15 years ago today I started my first tour in Vietnam and as a young man at that time, I had not expected 15 years later I would still be involved in fighting about the same war.

I would imagine that if I was in your chairs right now, however, the perspective of going to Vietnam might be enticing compared to the decision that you are going to have to make later on.

The PVA is a chartered service organization. All of its members have spinal cord injury or disease. We have been designed in the efforts to create a memorial for those who died in Vietnam for a long time. These funds have enabled PVA to start its fund campaign. PVA has also been involved in certain aspects of the design of the Vietnam memorial. The original design caused us fears about access to the memorial. It would be a blatant injustice to create a memorial and have those who were fighting in Vietnam

unable to approach it. PVA worked with the project director, Mr. Dubick, to reach a compromise to the original design. The result is the hard surface stone walkway that traverses the panels. Another change is the use of implements for landscaping to reinforce the entryway from the west wall of the memorial.

By the way, the handicapped parking area which you asked about earlier are the location of what we call the handicapped entrance, and the locator is done in part to be somewhat close to where the handicapped parking has been designated.

PVA also continued our involvement in the controversy erupted over the basic design of the proposed memorial. We did participate in the discussion led by Senator John Warner which would preserve the original design concept while adding those further elements to the whole which would overtly recognize those who faced their country's call. We understand there are those who oppose these modifications. As an organization of Vietnam veterans, we believe that the proposed statue by Mr. Hart and the other accommodations should be approved as this Commission previously adopted in concept.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to reiterate that PVA has put

an extensive effort into a memorial to those who served in Vietnam. We believe that changes incorporated ensuring accessibility to all those who wish to come and visit a memorial will prove effective. PVA has supported the compromise agreement which adds the statue, the American flag and the inscription. As my brother and I served in Vietnam, we were aware of the ranging debate taking place back home in America. As we returned in ones and twos to this, our homeland, we were reminded in often less conflicting way about our service to the country. Time has passed, and with the passage of time we are told that the American people have reconsidered the sentence that they passed on Vietnam veterans. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial seems symbolic of that long called for reprieve.

Now we find that Vietnam veterans involved in a debate and the irony does not escape us. The beauty of it has been said is in the eye of the beholder. If such is so there, then never will we be able to satisfy every beholder with this or any other. It might be in part to mark closed a dramatic chapter, someone's sensibilities might not be satisfied. If that be the case, I ask you to let it not be Vietnam veterans. I think they have sacrificed enough already. We urge support of the plan and compromise, and we

hope that you will do it very quickly.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you very much.

We go now to Richard J. Gallant, Service Director,
Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Please begin.

MR. GALLANT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of
the Commission, distinguished guests. I am Richard Gallant
for the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

By way of information, we are the only veterans
organization virtually chartered composed of combat wounded
veterans who are recipients of the Purple Heart medal. As
such, it would probably go without saying that we carry our
own memorial of Vietnam with us every day of the week. As
such, we have watched over the years the sundry comments or
controversies that have gone on over the Vietnam conflict
and also those which have addressed itself to a memorial to
recognize the valued benefits. And I would like to say now
on the Vietnam veterans that when you look at all of our
veterans from all of the wars, we have perhaps the finest
soldiers that ever served this Nation during the war in
Vietnam and, as such, we should do all that we can to show
them our respect, to give them a memorial that truly reflects