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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

January 7, 1982

Dear Colleague:

Congressman Hyde is circulating for Member's signatures, a letter to the President urging that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, due for groundbreaking on March 1, be scrapped. Don't sign it.

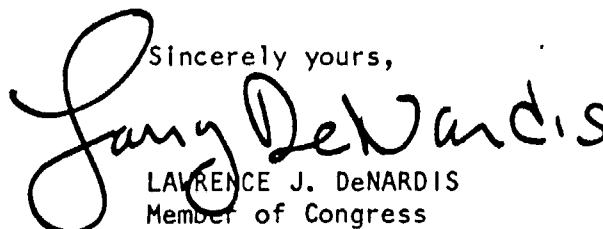
The memorial is the dream of a not-for-profit group, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. The VVMF's National Sponsoring Committee is composed of distinguished and patriotic Americans like General David Jones, General William Westmoreland, former President and Mrs. Ford, Max Cleland, and many others. The memorial is a private endeavor, with the dominant role being played by Vietnam veterans. No government funds are involved, only permission to establish the memorial on public grounds in West Potomac Park.

Congress has no business meddling in subjective judgments about the design of a memorial we are not financing. Our concern should be with the matter of orderly procedures, correctly followed. The terms and conditions of the Joint Resolution permitting construction have been scrupulously met by the VVMF.

Four and one-half million dollars have already been pledged or raised, including a \$1 million dollar commitment on the part of the American Legion. Incidentally, the Commodore Barry American Legion Post in Berwyn, Illinois, in Congressman Hyde's District, conducted a walkathon to raise funds for the memorial, on November 26, over six months after the design was revealed.

There is an odor of mischief in this last minute attempt to discredit the Vietnam veterans design selection process. Please review the enclosed critique of Henry's letter; and then join me in signing a brief note to Secretary Watt urging him to sign off on the land Congress authorized so that the March 1 ground-breaking date can be met. The memorial is to be dedicated on Veterans Day, 1982. Any delay will jeopardize that hope. Call my office (X53661) and help me help the VVMF finish the wonderful task it has set out to do.

Sincerely yours,


LAWRENCE J. DENARDIS
Member of Congress

Enclosure

QUOTES FROM THE CONGRESSMAN HYDE LETTER, DECEMBER 29, 1981
FOLLOWED BY MY OBSERVATIONS

"a situation has arisen"

The design was selected in May of last year, eight months ago, and was widely publicized at the time.

"alleged memorial"

The design, selected by a very prestigious jury assembled by Vietnam veterans, was approved by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. It was the largest design competition ever held in the United States.

"to my mind"

We know that tastes differ, but with due deference to Mr. Hyde's aesthetics, Time magazine cited the design as one of the five best in 1981.

"underground black memorial"

General Westmoreland. "It is no way a "trench", black polished granite is far more handsome than any other possible stone, ..."

"lists only the names of the dead"

VVMF made it clear in congressional testimony in 1980 that names of the dead and missing would be listed. Are there memorials listing the names of all who served?

"No mention or consideration is given the rest who served."

Below are the two inscriptions, one before the first name and the other after the last name:

Part I

In remembrance of the men and women of the armed forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam war. The names of those who gave their lives and of those who remain missing are inscribed in the order that they were taken from us.

Part 2

Our nation honors the courage, sacrifice, and devotion to duty of its Vietnam veterans.

The design in no way violates the provisions of the Congressional resolution.

(over)

"Another guideline was to avoid having political or military content."

Actually, the memorial was not to make a political statement; an important difference.

"as well as Pat Buchanan's recent Chicago Tribune column."

It is must reading. Brother Buchanan says, of the jury, "... one member allegedly had a long association with the American Communist Party." Where have we heard that before?

"no matter how many architects think it is artistic."

Again, General Westmoreland. "... the structure reflects dignity and good taste and blends in aesthetically well with that beautiful area of the mall."

Time magazine. "A brilliantly simple solution to the emotionally charged problem of honoring 57,709 victims of the controversial war."