

Projects:Interior/DC/Vietnam Veterans Memorial

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December 21, 1982

The Honorable Don Bailey  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Bailey:

I was glad to have a chance to talk with you in the Senate although we were not able to reach an agreement. I am writing to provide a further explanation as to why I could not agree to the passage of H.J. Res. 636 during the closing hours of Senate business last night.

As original sponsor of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Resolution in 1979, I worked closely with federal officials and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to carefully craft legislation which would establish a thorough and specific process for the approval of the design of the Memorial by three federal bodies. These three bodies, the Department of the Interior, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the Fine Arts Commission, have an ongoing process set up for the selection of appropriate designs and locations for public monuments which has worked well over the years. As you mentioned, the views of various veterans groups were solicited and carefully considered. It would be highly inconsistent with this Congressional mandate and in violation of the principle of separation of powers for the Congress, as a body, to interfere with this process.

I believe that the proposal on the location of the statue and flagpole which is currently under review by the appropriate bodies is within the spirit of the compromise made earlier this year. The final decision soon will be appropriately made by those charged with the responsibility by Congress to render it.

We both have the same goal in mind of ensuring that the Vietnam Veterans are properly honored and I will continue to work with you, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, and Federal officials to reach a successful conclusion to this project. I can understand how strongly you feel, because I have been disappointed by lack of progress in the Navy over a monument which represents my own years of service during World War II. When I recall, however, that every memorial in Washington has been the subject of controversy, including the Washington Monument, I have hope that these questions will all be happily resolved.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Charles McC. Mathias, Jr.  
United States Senator

CM:mhc