

**Written Statement of**  
**Raya Kenney, Executive Director, World War II Women's Memorial Foundation**  
**Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1945, H.R. 2290, H.R. 2306, & H.R. 4285**  
**Testimony on H.R.2290, the WWII Women's Memorial Location Act**  
**House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands**  
**July 16, 2025**

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of [H.R.2290](#), the World War II Women's Memorial Location Act. My name is Raya Kenney, and I am the Executive Director of the World War II Women's Memorial Foundation. Our mission is to establish a monument to honor the service and sacrifice of the more than 18 million women who worked on the home front during WWII.

This initiative began more than a decade ago with a 5<sup>th</sup> grade school project. My teacher asked my class to build a model monument dedicated to someone or something not yet commemorated in Washington, DC. I had just seen *A League of Their Own*, a film about women who stepped “up to the plate” to keep baseball in American lives during WWII and was inspired to learn more about America's “Rosies” and dedicate my school project to them.

As I researched the role of American women in WWII, I discovered that more than 18 million women answered the call to hold down the home front by entering more than 80 different fields and working as coders, pilots, engineers, electricians, mechanics, lumberjacks, postal carriers, and even taxi drivers. These women served as the backbone of the war effort and many directly contributed by building planes, tanks, munitions, and other equipment needed by American troops. As General Eisenhower said, “The contribution of the women of America, whether on the farm or in the factory or in uniform, to D-Day was a sine qua non of the invasion effort.” America's “Rosies” also changed the landscape of the American workforce. Between 1940 and 1945, American women jumped from 27 to almost 40 percent of the workforce.

So, at ten years old, I built a model monument using wood, concrete, fake grass, and a silver pen. My teacher then encouraged me to pursue the Memorial for real. I took her suggestion seriously and what followed was years of advocacy with the National Park Service, Congress, and other stakeholders. In 2022, Congress authorized my Foundation to establish the Memorial in Washington, DC<sup>1</sup>—and I was honored to testify before this Subcommittee as part of the initial authorization process.<sup>2</sup>

The next step was to assess the most appropriate location for the Memorial within our nation's capital. We worked with a consultant to conduct a preliminary site-selection study,

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<sup>1</sup> [Pub. L. No. 117-328](#).

<sup>2</sup> Hearing on H.R.5068 before the Subcomm. on Nat'l Parks, Forests and Pub. Lands of the H. Comm. on Nat. Res., Subcomm., 116th Cong. (2019) (statement of Raya Kenney), <https://congress.gov/116/meeting/house/110280/witnesses/HHRG-116-II10-Wstate-KenneyR-20191204.pdf>.

and we found that the locations with the strongest thematic and historical nexus are adjacent to the WWII Memorial or slightly northwest of the WWII Memorial in Constitution Gardens, where the so-called “Government Girls” worked in temporary munitions buildings during the war. Both of these sites are in the Reserve. The National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission also previously wrote to this Committee that “in order to thematically connect [the Memorial] with other memorials commemorating that era, the Foundation may eventually consider sites located in Area I.”<sup>3</sup> I strongly believe that the Memorial honoring the millions of American women of WWII should be dedicated within walking distance of the WWII Memorial, just as the Vietnam Women’s Memorial was dedicated yards away from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. However, the National Park Service and other relevant entities involved in the site-selection process cannot even consider these locations without additional congressional authority.

That is why we seek your support for [H.R.2290](#): to make the Memorial eligible to be built within Area I or the Reserve. Last Congress, this legislation garnered more than 60 bipartisan cosponsors in the House. And on March 24 of this year, the bill was reintroduced on a bipartisan, bicameral basis.<sup>4</sup> We are grateful to our House leads, Representatives Dingell and Fulcher, as well as our more than 30 bipartisan House cosponsors, for their determination to help complete the story of WWII on the Mall.

Importantly, while the official design phase comes later in the process, we currently contemplate that the Memorial would be relatively small in size—less than one-quarter of an acre, low to the ground, and unobtrusive to the national landscape.<sup>5</sup> Small—but impactful.

Swift action to establish the Memorial is vital. Many of our Rosies are celebrating their centennial birthdays and beyond. Much like today’s veterans, we must honor their contributions to America and not allow their stories to be lost. Today, as we near the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our victory in WWII and the 250<sup>th</sup> birthday of this great nation, it is time to ensure the service and sacrifice of the American women of WWII are eternally etched into our collective memory.

Thank you for inviting me to testify about the Memorial and the location legislation that is necessary to ensure it finds the most appropriate home. I also want to thank the Rosies for allowing me to share and preserve their history. If there’s one thing I’ve learned from these women, it’s that when we work together, we *can* do it.

Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from the Nat’l Cap. Mem’l Advisory Comm’n to Raúl Grijalva, Chairman, U.S. House of Rep. Comm. on Nat. Res. (Mar. 20, 2020) (on file with author).

<sup>4</sup> The Senate companion is [S.1088](#), 119th Cong. (2025).

<sup>5</sup> There are almost 700 acres of green space in the Reserve. We are seeking .04% of that to honor the 18 million American women of World War II.