

**Testimony of Michael A. Caldwell,
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U.S. Department of the Interior**

**House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Federal Lands**

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 309, National Law Enforcement Officers Remembrance, Support and Community Outreach Act; H.R. 2196, to provide for an extension of the legislative authority of the National Emergency Medical Services Memorial Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs; H.R. 4386, to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to clarify entrance privileges for vehicles with respect to the America the Beautiful interagency pass; H.R. 4467, Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act

September 18, 2025

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's (Department) views on the following legislation:

H.R. 309, National Law Enforcement Officers Remembrance, Support and Community Outreach Act

H.R. 309, the National Law Enforcement Officers Remembrance, Support and Community Outreach Act, would require the Secretary of the Interior to award a grant to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund for expenses associated with operating and enhancing the community outreach, public education and officer safety and wellness programs of the National Law Enforcement Museum. The grant would be awarded for each of the seven fiscal years following enactment. In addition, the bill authorizes appropriations of \$6 million each year and establishes a reporting requirement for the Department to document expenditures and progress in delivering outreach through the Memorial Fund. If less than \$6 million is provided in a fiscal year, the Secretary can transfer other National Park Service (NPS) funds as necessary.

The Department recognizes the important work of the National Law Enforcement Museum and appreciates the value of its community outreach and public education efforts. We defer to Congress on the creation of a grant program to support these efforts.

H.R. 2196, to provide for an extension of the legislative authority of the National Emergency Medical Services Memorial Foundation to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs

The Department supports H.R. 2196.

H.R. 2196 extends the legislative authority of the National Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Memorial Foundation (Foundation) to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs until November 3, 2032. The Foundation received its initial seven-year authority from Congress to establish a commemorative work that honors the commitment and sacrifice of EMS professionals in 2018. In the ensuing seven years, the Foundation has made significant progress in navigating the complex site selection process and advancing the preliminary design concepts. However, additional time is needed to bring this worthwhile national tribute to completion.

The National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (Commission) reviewed H.R. 2196 and its companion bill, S. 2546. The Commission was established by the Commemorative Works Act of 1986 to provide its views to Congress and to the Secretary of the Interior regarding the establishment of commemorative works in the District of Columbia. 40 U.S.C. 89 *et seq.* In a unanimous statement of support, the Commission affirmed that extending the authority of the National EMS Memorial Foundation is essential to ensure the successful establishment of a memorial that will stand as an enduring tribute to the dedication and sacrifice of the men and women who respond in moments of greatest need.

The Department agrees with the Commission's recommendation. EMS professionals serve on the front lines of emergencies, often at great personal risk, providing lifesaving care in times of crisis. Extending this legislative authority will give the Foundation the certainty it needs to complete its mission and ensure that our Nation properly recognizes the dedication and sacrifice of these public servants.

H.R. 4386, to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to clarify entrance privileges for vehicles with respect to the America the Beautiful interagency pass

The Department supports H.R. 4386.

The Interagency Pass Program, also known as the America the Beautiful: National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes, is a collaboration among six federal agencies, including the National Park Service, providing access to over 2,000 public land recreation sites nationwide. Each pass, including the Annual Pass, covers entrance and standard amenity recreation fees.

In 2023, the Interagency Pass Program updated its policy to create uniform rules for pass usage among participating agencies, which took effect in 2024. This change was part of the Department's ongoing effort to develop a digital version of the pass. While this standardization was important, it unintentionally reduced the number of motorcycle riders covered by a single pass from two to one, as each pass is now linked to one user per vehicle. H.R. 4386 aims to restore the previous motorcycle policy, requiring the Secretary of the Interior to apply this policy to all America the Beautiful pass options, including the Annual Pass. Reverting to the old policy would help lower costs for visitors while maintaining consistency within the pass program.

H.R. 4467, Vicksburg National Military Park Boundary Modification Act

H.R. 4467 would convey approximately 10 acres of land to the State from the park to be used for a welcome center, interpretive center, museum, or other public use. The Department supports the goals of this legislation and the intent to enhance visitor orientation and interpretation. However, we would welcome the opportunity to work with the bill's sponsor and the Subcommittee on amendments that would ensure the bill's purposes are achieved in a manner that protects the long-term integrity of Vicksburg National Military Park.

Specifically, we recommend the use of the two most recent Legislative Maps (306/194,908 and 306/194,907 dated September 2024), which provide a precise description of the acreage. We further recommend clarifying that any development on the conveyed land be consistent with the interpretive mission of Vicksburg National Military Park. This will ensure that the visitor experience is enhanced, not diluted, and that the land remains in service of the park's commemorative and educational purposes.

Chairman Tiffany, that concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions from members of the committee.