



NATIONAL
EMS MEMORIAL
FOUNDATION
Commitment, Service & Sacrifice

Written testimony of James Robinson, Director of the National EMS Memorial Foundation, to the House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Federal Lands for its legislative hearing Thursday, September 18, 2025, at 10:00 in room 1324, Longworth House Office Building

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and esteemed members of the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands:

It is truly an honor to be before you today and to ask you in person to support H.R. 2196, introduced in the House by your colleagues, Representatives Hudson and Lynch. My name is James Robinson and I am a career emergency medical services (EMS) clinician from Colorado. I have spent my entire adult life in public service as a paramedic and EMS leader. In addition to my current role as the Chief of Thompson Valley EMS in Northern Colorado, I have served as a volunteer board member of the National EMS Memorial Foundation since 2011.

Founded in 2007, the spark of National EMS Memorial Foundation was ignited by somber reflections not unlike those we all experienced this week in remembrance of our colleagues and our fellow Americans lost twenty-four years ago during the 9/11 attacks. Annually, there is a weekend of inspiring events honoring EMS providers who pay the ultimate sacrifice in the service of others. The location of these events has changed over the years, and we realized what was, and is still missing is a permanent place for hosting these events, for private reflection throughout the year, and for the public recognition of EMS.

The Foundation's mission is to establish a permanent national memorial in our nation's capital to honor the commitment, service and sacrifice of EMS providers caring for communities across the United States. We are past and current EMS clinicians and family members of EMS providers who have our own stories of loss, of the honor of serving others, and of the miracles of life.

Across our great nation, EMS providers respond to calls for help twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year in all weather, in all conditions, and at risk of our personal safety--without hesitation. Our rewards are intrinsic, among them being upholding the trust our communities have placed in us to care for them in their times of need. Our dedication to our patients never waivers, as evidenced by the heroic efforts of my EMS colleagues nationwide during the COVID pandemic. We showed up, and kept showing up despite losing many of our own. I would like to share an example of this sacred trust with you.

As EMS providers, we respond to calls for help in the middle of the night, and are often met by people in sleeping attire or bathrobes, and hurried into their homes because *they trust that we*

are going to help them. They don't know us, never ask us if we are appropriately certified, have been trained properly, or if we have undergone criminal background checks--*they trust that we are going to help them.* In the course of our medical history taking and physical examinations, we often ask them highly personal questions they would not answer for their family members or closest confidants. We put our hands on their bodies to perform physical exams and expose their bodies to visualize injuries. Our patients let us do these things because *they trust that we are going to help them.* We understand the significance of this trust and upholding it is why we do what we do.

In my EMS career, I have found that we, the helpers, are uncomfortable being on the other end of this relationship. We don't like to ask for help. But that is what I am here to do today, not on behalf of the National EMS Memorial Foundation, but on behalf of the helpers, the men and women of EMS.

The Foundation was authorized to build a permanent commemorative work in the national capital environs through Public Law 115-275, passed unanimously in both chambers in the 117th Congress and signed into law during President Trump's first term on November 3, 2018. Since its initial authorization, the Foundation has made great strides toward our goal. However, circumstances beyond our control, particularly the COVID pandemic, slowed the process and we simply will need more time to obtain final approvals.

As members of this subcommittee are aware, a Commemorative Works Act authorization establishes a seven-year deadline by which construction must begin or a memorial loses its congressional authorization, and in our case is due to expire on November 3, 2025. We are not outliers in seeking a reauthorization to continue our efforts, as many other recent memorials and commemorative works have required more time to complete the projects. This is fairly standard that organizations authorized for the purposes of constructing a memorial in the National Capital region need an extension, often more than one.

To that end, the House Resolution you are considering today, and the companion Senate bill, S.2546, to extend the authorization are necessary for us to continue the efforts to build a place to appropriately honor the commitment, service and sacrifice of EMS providers here in Washington.

The Foundation has conducted an extensive site evaluation, narrowing site selection from 312 potential sites to three based on siting guidelines laid out in the CWA, and are awaiting final approval for our preferred location. This site, a section of the Hubert H. Humphrey Building (HHS Headquarters) plaza bordered by Independence Avenue SW and 3rd Street SW, is the optimum site for the memorial. It was chosen partially because of the Department of Health and Human Services and its predecessor, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's historical nexus to the origins of organized EMS in the United States.

Upon determining the site, the Foundation advanced through the site approval and design approval processes as established in the CWA. Per the CWA, a site must be approved by the National Capital Memorial Advisory Committee (NCMAC) and the site and design must be approved by the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). All three expressed no opposition to the preferred site. On Monday, May 12th of this

year, we presented to the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) regarding H.R. 2196, and gained unanimous support from the commissioners. The National Park Service also supports extending the authorization.

We have broad support for our efforts in the EMS community and among our partners in the fire service and in law enforcement. Despite the impacts of the COVID pandemic on us as active EMS providers and on the bureaucratic processes here in Washington, we are poised to enter the next phase of the Commemorative Works Act with this reauthorization, and ask for your support for H.R. 2196 to authorize the National EMS Memorial Foundation to continue our efforts.

Thank you again for the invitation to be here today and I am glad to answer your questions.