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Senate

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, in the early part of the Eisenhower years, I joined that administration and later came to Washington and then met a whole series of World War II veterans. We talked and dreamed then of a memorial to a war in which we had just been. Fourteen years ago, the World War II memorial was conceived and the process started, to have it built here in Washington, DC. Eight years ago, the Congress authorized this memorial; 6 years ago the first of 22 public hearings on the site and design of the memorial commenced.

Construction was scheduled to start last month, but the memorial is now bogged down in legal and procedural issues.

Of the 16 million men and women who served in World War II, only 5 million are alive today. We are now losing veterans of the greatest generation at the rate of 1,100 veterans a day. I questioned that, but we checked it; 1,100 veterans of World War II are passing away each day. By the year 2004, there will be less than 4 million of us.

In my home State of Alaska, in the last 10 years, we lost one-third of the veterans whom I had known and worked with so long.

The site design of our memorial has been endorsed by the Historic Preservation Officer of the District of Columbia, it has received four endorsements of the District of Columbia's Preservation Review Board, and five approvals each from the Committee on Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission.

The memorial is governed by the Commemorative Works Act of 1986. That act gave the final site and design approval to the Commission on Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission and the Secretary of the Interior.

Eight sites were considered for the memorial. In 1998, the design was approved by the Commission on Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission and the site selection was reaffirmed. In 1998, the National Park Service, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, completed an environmental assessment and issued a finding of no significant impact. In the year 2000, the final design was approved by the Commission on Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission, and on November 11 of last year, the year 2000, a ceremonial groundbreaking took place for this memorial.

More than 500,000 Americans have sent donations to the fundraising campaign, 48 State legislatures have done the same thing, 1,100 schools and more than 450 veterans groups, who represent 11 million veterans.

Even though all the procedural steps have been taken, the memorial has now been delayed because of a procedural issue involving the National Capital Planning Commission. The National Capital Planning Commission decision of 2 years ago of including a World War II memorial has been placed in question because the former National Capital Planning Commission chairman continued to serve after the expiration of his term. The legislation that would originally establish this commission permitted members to serve until replaced, but when that law was amended, inadvertently the language allowing continuous service fell out with no explanation. That created a technicality that has forced a review now, again, by the National Capital Planning Commission.

This memorial has been through 22 public hearings, it has complied with

every applicable law, and this technicality regarding the National Capital Planning Commission Board should not penalize the millions of veterans who served our country honorably when asked to do so. They want to see this memorial.

I congratulate the House of Representatives, particularly Congressman STUMP, for sending this legislation to the Senate. I thank all who have been very considerate in trying to work out the problems relating to it. I believe I am joined by all the veterans of World War II who serve in this body in urging that the House bill be enacted and sent to the President for his signature immediately.

For many of us, this year marks the 55th year since we left the military service. We were in World War II and returned home.

We want to see this memorial finished while a significant number of our comrades are still alive. We want to be there when this memorial is opened.

Memorial Day for 2001 is just 1 week from next Monday. The veterans of this Nation intended to celebrate the initiation of this memorial on that day. They will not be able to do so unless the bill gets to the President in time to sign it. This is more than a dream of our veterans; it is a demand on our country. I urge no Senator stand in the way of the prompt enactment of this bill.

REQUEST FOR ABSENCE FROM THE SENATE

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be excused from the voting in the Senate until 6:30 p.m. next Tuesday, commencing at the adjournment today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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