

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress
U.S. House of Representatives

Before the Subcommittee on Benefits of the
House Veteran's Affairs Committee
on
H.R. 2206, Prisoner of War/Missing in Action National Memorial Act

April 29, 2004

I want to thank the Chairman and the Subcommittee for giving me the opportunity to speak in support of my legislation H.R. 2206, the Prisoner of War/Missing in Action National Memorial Act of 2003.

Introduced on May 22, 2003, H.R. 2206 would designate the Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Memorial presently being built at Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California as *the National POW/MIA Memorial*.

Currently, no National memorial exists to honor both prisoners of war and those missing in action, nor is there a designated POW/MIA statue. Andersonville National Historic Site in Andersonville, GA, in fact, is the only park in the National Park System to serve as a memorial specifically for American prisoners of war throughout the nation's history...but does not include recognition of those missing in action. Congress stated in the authorizing legislation that this park's purpose is "to provide an understanding of the overall prisoner of war story of the Civil War, to interpret the role of prisoner of war camps in history, to commemorate the sacrifice of Americans who lost their lives in such camps, and to preserve the monuments located within the site". In 1998 a Museum was dedicated at Andersonville for men and women of this country who have suffered captivity.

The POW/MIA Memorial at the Riverside National Cemetery would stand to fulfill the existing need by our Nation for Monuments and Memorials that pay homage to all our Armed Services' Veterans by:

One - Recognizing and honoring all Veterans who, in service to this Nation, sacrificed their physical and mental well-being as Prisoners of War AND recognize the plight of more than 89,000 Veterans who did not return home -- our MIAs;

Two - Creating accessibility to the millions of Americans living west of the Mississippi to visit a National Memorial and Monument in honor of the men and women of the Armed Services, specifically for POWs and MIAs. (Presently, most National Memorials and Monuments lie east of the Mississippi); and,

Three - Continuing the Riverside National Cemetery's effort to memorialize our nation's veterans at National Cemeteries throughout the country through the incorporation of the memorial park concept.

Moreover, the Riverside National Cemetery provides the IDEAL location for this National Memorial given its status as the second largest resting place, in our national cemetery system, with 125,000 men and women of our armed forces standing silent vigil. In fact, in less than five short years, it is expected to be the largest cemetery in the national system. And in six decades it will have more than 1.4 million honored veterans, making Riverside National Cemetery larger than the Arlington National Cemetery – the most widely recognized. What better place to have a national memorial...a National Shrine in honor of American POWs and MIAs.

The POW/MIA Memorial would depict a one and one-half scale life size sculpture of a Prisoner of War on his knees with his arms pinned behind his back by a bamboo/wooden rod and his head defiantly lifted towards heaven (He has not lost hope...he is not defeated). The statue is surrounded by columns of black granite and rests a few yards from the black and white flag, the National Symbol of the POW/MIA cause. It was sculpted by a renowned California artist Lewis Lee Millet Jr., son of Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Colonel Lewis Millett Senior USA (Ret.). The design has received approval from the National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Finally, at the Riverside National Cemetery the POW/MIA National Memorial would proudly join the National Medal of Honor Memorial (CMOH) at the Riverside National Cemetery, and like the CMOH Memorial will be paid for and maintained by private dollars. For this reason the Congressional Budget Offices has given H.R. 2206 a score of zero, zero cost to the American taxpayer, making both Memorials true representations of the people and by the people of the United States of America. Clearly, this project's funding shows that it has been given the stamp of approval by the American public, including our American Veterans and their families. Additionally, H.R. 2206 legislation has received wide support from Veterans organizations, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Thank you once again Chairman and the whole Subcommittee on Veterans Benefits for letting me speak on behalf of my legislation H.R. 2206, the Prisoner of War/Missing in Action National Memorial Act. I look forward working with you all in seeing that H.R. 2206 becomes law giving our American Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action the long overdue National Memorial they deserve.