



Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives

Legislative Hearing

H.R. 3465 – “Fallen Journalists Memorial Act of 2019”

December 4, 2019

Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the subcommittee, we commend you for holding this legislative hearing on H.R. 3465, “The Fallen Journalists Memorial Act of 2019,” and respectively submit these comments in support of the legislation. The News Media for Open Government (NMOG) is a broad coalition of news media and journalism organizations that has been working for more than a decade to ensure laws, policies and practices that preserve and protect freedom of the press, open government, and the free flow of information in our democratic society.

Journalists are the linchpin of American democracy; the foundation of an informed citizenry. Whether covering the opening of a new local business, a city council meeting, the White House or war, journalists seek the truth and deliver news to their readers about their local communities and the rest of the world. Doing so, however, can often be dangerous.

It was a little more than a year ago that the United States saw the deadliest attack on journalism in our nation’s modern history, when five *Capital Gazette* employees were killed in their Annapolis, Maryland, newsroom because someone did not like what they had published. In 2015, broadcast journalist Alison Parker and cameraman, Adam Ward with WDBJ-TV in Roanoke, Virginia, were also slain by a gunman while on a routine assignment to interview the local head of the Chamber of Commerce. Journalists from Pulitzer Prize-winning syndicated columnist Ernie Pyle in World War II to NBC’s David Bloom in the Iraq War lost their lives while traveling with troops so that American citizens, including soldiers’ families, could stay up-to-date of U.S. military action on foreign soil. Over our nation’s history, more than a hundred U.S. journalists have died doing their jobs so that the American public could stay informed. In the past several years there have been record numbers of journalists killed.

When a journalist is killed in the line of duty, the entire community suffers. There is one less watchdog, one less truth-teller and one less engaged citizen in the world. But outside of their newsrooms and the news industry, they rarely receive the recognition they deserve for their sacrifice.

The News Media for Open Government believes the time is right for our country to recognize these brave journalists. A national memorial will not only honor journalists who have sacrificed their lives in pursuit of the news, it also will be an important reminder to our fellow

citizens and visitors from around the world of the importance of journalism and a free press in a functioning democracy.

This effort to create a Fallen Journalists Memorial is particularly timely as the Newseum – and its memorial for journalists – is due to shut down at the end of 2019. A Fallen Journalists Memorial on Federal land in Washington, D.C., would replace this shrine with a more visible and accessible tribute to journalists who have given their lives while reporting the news. As the subcommittee knows, if authorized by Congress, the memorial will be privately funded. The members of the News Media for Open Government will work diligently with the Fallen Journalists Memorial Foundation to see that this memorial becomes a reality and is an inspiration for all who visit it.

The News Media for Open Government encourages the subcommittee to favorably report the Fallen Journalists Memorial Act of 2019 as soon as possible. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Members of NMOG include: The Associated Press, Association of Alternative Newsmedia, National Association of Broadcasters, National Newspaper Association, News Leaders Association, News Media Alliance, Online News Association, Radio Television Digital News Association, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and Society of Professional Journalists