

SOUND OFF!



BULLETIN

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

#5

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

29 MAY 2006 – MEMORIAL DAY

WHY DON'T WE CARE ENOUGH?

In December 2000, Congress passed and President Clinton signed into law PL 106-579, establishing the White House Commission on the National Moment of Remembrance. It is a mark of the lack of concern and involvement of the American people that this idea has not caught on. It is also a mark of inattention and lack of financial support by Congress and the Administration. The commission runs an online store to try to raise money for its own support!

If you would like to see what a truly grateful nation can do go to <http://www.terry-kelly.com/pittance.htm>, read the story there, play the video, [video requires the free Quicktime reader which you can download from www.apple.com/quicktime/download/win.html] and see how the Canadians treat the memory of their fallen brothers and sisters. I promise you that you will be moved by the respect and honor shown there.

Then read the article below and ask yourself, "Why?".

MOMENT OF REMEMBRANCE HASN'T CAUGHT ON

Associated Press | May 29, 2006

A tiny White House commission has spent the past five years and \$1.5 million trying to bring a new American tradition to Memorial Day's barbecues, parades and sales: A moment of remembrance, a sigh, perhaps a prayer. Just a 30-second pause.

The results, so far, are mixed.

The White House Commission on the National Moment of Remembrance < www.remember.gov > does have a theme song < www.remember.gov/moment/documents/01-OnthisDayLongVersion_000.MP3 > donated by Charles Strouse, creator of the musical "Annie." There's a logo, pens and coasters, prewritten news articles and television spots. There have been events, like a sand-sculpture display inspired by D-Day.

And a few towns, businesses and organizations have paused silently at 3 p.m. on Memorial Day.

In general, though, the commission's hyper-energetic executive director, Carmella LaSpada, has been somewhat frustrated by the lack of interest.

"We're a little disappointed," she said. "What has been the problem is that we haven't gotten the support that we would like to have from the media."

Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., a longtime friend of LaSpada's who sponsored the Legislation to create the commission, said he's still committed to its mission, but he laughs when he thinks about the logistics of actually pulling it off.

"You try and quiet down a country of 300 million," he said. "We're a busy people in a busy nation in a busy world. I think it is entirely appropriate to designate a special time to slow down and stop and think for a moment about the people who sacrificed to make this a great country."

LaSpada has been repeatedly criticized in annual federal financial audits for blurring the lines between her tiny federal agency and No Greater Love, a nonprofit agency LaSpada founded 30 years ago, which operates right next door and has a similar mission.

In July, 2005, an auditor with the Government Accounting Office, the investigatory arm of Congress, wrote that "the distinction between the two organizations could be misperceived." A new financial audit is currently under way, said a GAO spokesman.

LaSpada said she's learning to separate the two.

"Personally, I'd rather play down No Greater Love because it looks like I'm still wearing two hats," she said. "I'm no longer affiliated with any No Greater Love. When you are director of an independent government agency you can't be affiliated with any other group."

As executive director of the commission and White House liaison, LaSpada receives about \$165,000 in salary and benefits, according to federal reports. As executive director at No Greater Love, she was paid \$13,840 in 2001, the last year she was listed as running that organization, according to the non-profit's tax forms.

LaSpada said that in addition to a lack of cooperation from the media, she's been stymied because her commission was supposed to be loaned six employees - one each from the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Veterans Affairs, and Department of Education. But so far she's only had one Navy staffer assigned on a six-month basis.

She said her staff consists of an executive assistant who is, himself, donated to the commission by a source she would not name. She said No Greater Love also provides some volunteer assistance. The commission's office space is donated by several unions.

Carson Ross, a former Missouri state representative who was appointed as a charter commission member by President Bush, said he quit after learning in conference call meetings that his role was fundraising. The annual \$250,000 budget didn't cover much more than staff, he said.

"I think it's a great idea that on Memorial Day, instead of just worrying about barbecues, that everyone should pause and pay tribute to people in the military, but I think that if this was something Congress and the Executive Office wanted then they should fund the darned thing," he said.

The Act was signed into law by President Clinton, and launched under President Bush.

Ross said that since he left, in 2002, he hasn't heard another thing about a National Moment of Remembrance.

"With all the things going on in the world, it just doesn't register very high," he said. "And if we can't make it work, if we can't get it off the ground, let's not spend any more money or time on it. Let's put those resources into something worthwhile."

But LaSpada said she's not even considering giving up.

"I'll give you my word," she said, "before I leave here, this moment is going to be a new American tradition. I'll do whatever it takes to make this happen."

<http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,98823,00.html>

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