

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 26, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of Interior
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

I write today regarding the inaccessibility of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial (FDR Memorial) for people with disabilities and to respectfully request the National Park Service (NPS) address the numerous accessibility issues, which have lasted for decades, in time for the memorial's 25th anniversary on May 2, 2022.

A recent report by Dr. Cheryl Fogle-Hatch outlines a number of ways in which the FDR Memorial fails to meet accessibility standards, particularly for people who are blind or visually impaired. Dr. Fogle-Hatch explains in detail how the FDR Memorial falls short in providing accessible options, including:

- the NPS website failing to provide brochures with updated Unified English Braille (UEB);
- the memorial not displaying legible Braille on the walls of the memorial; and
- the lack of protective barriers that are of proper height for blind individuals.

Furthermore, there is evidence that these issues have been longstanding as they were highlighted in *The Washington Post* article, "FDR Memorial's Braille Letters Pose Sizable Problem for Blind" as early as 1997. To these shortcomings, Dr. Fogle-Hatch's report provides detailed and straight-forward recommendations for improvement. Further, without these modifications, the NPS is failing to uphold the very values that promote disability rights enshrined in the Prologue Room at the FDR Memorial itself.

I have introduced Senate Resolution 86 (S.Res.86) to call for the recommitment of the United States to the promotion of disability rights and to the values enshrined in the Prologue Room of the FDR Memorial. This resolution calls on NPS and the National Park Foundation to continue to increase access to the FDR Memorial for individuals with disabilities and to support the development of accessible educational materials.

It is past due that NPS honor the needs of the disabled community and make the FDR Memorial fully accessible. I urge the NPS to move swiftly to incorporate the recommendations of Dr. Fogle-Hatch at the FDR Memorial to improve accessibility. Specifically, I urge NPS to facilitate the following:

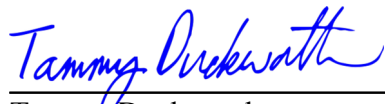
- the creation of a mobile guide accessible by smartphones to allow individuals with disabilities to use their own preferred accessibility settings;

- update the FDR Memorial's brochure to conform to current UEB code and include a descriptive layout of the Memorial;
- add wayside interpretive panels in print and UEB code around the Memorial; and
- install guardrails around the in-ground fountain in Room One that are no higher than 27 inches, in order to allow the barrier to be detected by a standard white cane.

While we've come closer to having true representation for our community at this memorial, we will never truly reach that milestone until every American can access and enjoy it. Incorporating these recommendations would illustrate NPS's commitment to civil rights and allegiance to creating public spaces to be enjoyed by all Americans.

Several disability organizations have been fighting for accessibility at our Nation's parks and memorials for decades, highlighting that this is an important and pressing issue for the disability community. As the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the FDR Memorial Prologue Room approaches, I am confident we will find a path forward in addressing these issues. I understand that some recent efforts and planning have been initiated for this Memorial, I look forward to hearing what those are. I deeply appreciate your urgent consideration of these recommendations, and I look forward to your commitment to improving accessibility at the FDR Memorial.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator