

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL AWARDED \$2 MILLION GRANT FROM LILLY ENDOWMENT INC. TO COMPLETE FDR D-DAY PRAYER PLAQUE ADDITION AND CIRCLE OF REMEMBRANCE RESTORATION PROJECT**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The Friends of the National World War II Memorial (Friends) announced today that it was awarded a \$2 million grant by Lilly Endowment Inc. to add President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s D-Day Prayer to the World War II Memorial, restore the “Circle of Remembrance” – the area where the prayer will be placed, and to develop interpretative programming. This effort will complete the World War II Memorial, and the additional programming - both onsite and online – will explore the stories of the everyday men and, in particular, the women, of all backgrounds, who served and without whom victory would not have been possible.

President Roosevelt’s D-Day Prayer was not included on the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. when it was completed and dedicated in 2004. In 2014, President Barack Obama signed into law the World War II Memorial Prayer Act (Public Law 113-123) directing that the prayer be added to the World War II Memorial. The legislation stipulated that no federal funds could be used to implement this directive. Therefore, Friends took on the responsibility of designing and funding the addition of FDR’s D-Day Prayer to the Memorial and restoring the “Circle of Remembrance,” a landscaped area located at the northwestern corner of the Memorial site where the Prayer will be placed.

“The addition of the D-Day Prayer Plaque and the Restoration of the Circle of Remembrance will be an important and meaningful addition to the Memorial, which is visited by the nearly five million people each year, providing a contemplative space to reflect on and remember the more than 400,000 American souls lost during World War II,” said Holly Rotondi, executive director of Friends of the National World War II Memorial. “FDR’s D-Day prayer was not only one of the largest mass prayers in history; but, more importantly, was one of the most unifying moments in our nation’s history.”

“Lilly Endowment was pleased to help fund the creation of the World War II Memorial in 1999,” said Christopher Coble, the Endowment’s vice president for religion. “We believe that the addition of FDR’s D-Day prayer and the programming in the restored Circle of Remembrance will greatly enhance the experience of visitors to the Memorial. The Circle of Remembrance will provide a quiet place at the Memorial for people to remember and reflect on the sacrifices of the men and women who served to protect our freedoms.”

Friends will also develop an online interpretative program with the award, working in collaboration with *New York Times* best-selling author Alex Kershaw. Working with Kershaw, Friends will produce 25-30 video profiles of female World War II veterans. The goal of the video profiles is to educate the American public about the contribution of women to the war effort and have this educational content easily and readily available online for years to come.

The D-Day Prayer will be a free-standing element within the restored Circle of Remembrance with the bronze plaque held by granite piers, providing material continuity and lighter feeling.

Friends anticipates a June 6, 2022 dedication of the FDR D-Day Prayer Plaque addition.

**About Friends of the National World War II Memorial ([www.wwiimemorialfriends.org](http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org)):**

Founded in 2007, the Friends of the National World War II Memorial (Friends) is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to honoring and preserving the national memory of World War II and to creating the next “Greatest Generation” of tomorrow. To meet this mission, Friends sponsors an annual public lecture series featuring prominent historians; hosts an annual teachers conference in Washington, DC; and collects and archives video interviews of World War II veterans and other members of the Greatest Generation. Additionally, Friends has the lead responsibility in planning, staging, and funding five or more major national commemorative events annually and is

currently sponsoring a national four-year World War II 75th anniversary commemoration. Friends relies on private support to breathe new life into the Memorial and to ensure that it continues to serve as a living lesson for all Americans.

**About Lilly Endowment Inc. ([www.lillyendowment.org](http://www.lillyendowment.org)):**

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, the Endowment is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion and maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. In addition to strengthening the leadership and vitality of Christian congregations throughout the United States, the Endowment's grantmaking in religion aims to support fair and accurate portrayals of the role religion plays in the U.S. and across the globe.

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**Media Inquiries:**

Scott Warner

703-231-6925

[swarner@wwiimemorialfriends.org](mailto:swarner@wwiimemorialfriends.org)