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## *House of Representatives*

HONORING THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE MISSISSIPPI NATIONAL RIVER AND RECREATION AREA

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM  
OF MINNESOTA IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. MCCOLLUM: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor National Park Service staff, volunteers and partners of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) on the 25th anniversary of its establishment as a national park. This 72-mile park corridor, winding northwest to southeast through the Saint Paul-Minneapolis metropolitan area, crosses some of the most naturally, culturally, economically and nationally significant areas in the United States. It is the only national park dedicated exclusively to the Mississippi River.

The late Congressman Bruce Vento (D-MN-04) provided the vision and legislative sponsorship that led to the creation of the park in 1988. It is a true honor to have called Bruce a friend. He was a dedicated environmental advocate, and his leadership helped forge a uniquely new kind of national park – a partnership park. The National Park Service owns little of the land within MNRRA, but works seamlessly with local governments, state agencies, non-profits, businesses, educational institutions and individuals to protect our precious lands and resources along the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities.

As the lifelong home of Congressman Vento, it is fitting that Saint Paul is the base of park operations. Both the headquarters as well as the visitor center in the Science Museum of Minnesota are nestled alongside the river in downtown Saint Paul. Despite being in the center of a busy urban area, this stretch of the upper Mississippi River is teeming with life, providing food and shelter for countless birds, fish and mammals. The very symbol of

America – the bald eagle – is well represented in the park with one of the largest nesting populations in the country.

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area offers beautiful trails and scenic landscapes for people to enjoy in the heart of the Twin Cities. Some of the most important sites in our history are located here – Fort Snelling, Saint Anthony Falls and the confluence of the Mississippi with the Minnesota River. Even before settlers dispossessed this land in the 1800s, original Mdewakanton Dakota living here considered this their Eden, the center of the world.

The Mississippi National River Recreation Area is truly a park that brings history, science and recreation together. No better example is the success of the Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventure – a special partnership between the National Park Service, local schools, nonprofits, businesses and many others – that is providing an opportunity for 10,000 urban youth each year to experience the river from voyageur canoes. Students learn about the river and its special significance through direct “hands on the canoe paddle” experience.

While it is still relatively new by national park standards, it is an honor to celebrate this major milestone. Mr. Speaker, please join me in paying tribute to the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.