

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 3, 2016

The Honorable Patrick Murphy
Acting Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write urging you to immediately reinstate inurnment and full military honors eligibility for the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC). These women pioneered the way for all women to serve in uniform and deserve the honors they earned.

As you are aware, the WASP stepped up to serve during a time of great need during World War II, flying missions such as ferrying airplanes, training combat pilots, and towing airborne targets. The WASP trained in the military style: marching, living in barracks, participating in infantry drills, and taking oaths of allegiance. 38 of these volunteer pilots died serving their country.

The WASP flew 60 million miles of operation flights in 78 different types of aircraft. They were effectively performing military duties, flying warplanes, and some gave the ultimate sacrifice while serving.

General Henry "Hap" Arnold, in establishing the WASP unit, made clear his intentions that they would become full military units. As they entered training in 1943, General Arnold warned them "it is probable WASPs will be militarized" and ordered, "if you are not prepared to follow through in this event, do not report at Sweetwater..." Indeed, while our culture at the time failed to fully value women equally, had this been the modern era, WASPs would have simply been military pilots. Had they been male pilots during World War II, they could have accepted active duty commissioning after their 90-day training period.

It is clear the main reason the WASP were not commissioned at the time was cultural hang-ups on the role of women in the military. When we needed everyone in the country to contribute to World War II, these women answered the call. The men who flew the same missions as the WASP before, alongside, and after these women would have been able to earn eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery. In 1977, the WASP were finally given veterans status, after the fact. The Air Force then issued them Honorable Discharge papers, along with medals they would have earned if they were active duty during World War II.

We understand that space in the Columbarium at ANC is limited, however, of the approximately 1000 WASPs who have already passed away, only a handful have decided to have their ashes

inurned at Arlington National Cemetery. Today, there are only roughly 110 WASPs remaining, and space constraints do not justify denying these women their honors. Additionally, it is critical that the legacy of the WASP is memorialized at Arlington for future generations. They were truly pioneers and a critical part of our military history for the millions of visitors who come to Arlington each year.

Elaine Harmon served as a WASP and made it clear in writing to her family that she desired to be laid to rest in the Columbarium at Arlington. She made her final flight on April 21, 2015. Her ashes are now sitting on a shelf in her granddaughter's closet due to the Army's rejection of the request to land at Arlington. That is no way to treat a hero. We are also aware that another WASP named Ruth Wright Guhse was rejected for entry in 2015.

We believe you have every authority you need to resume allowing WASPs to be inurned in Arlington National Cemetery without delay. Although Public Law 95-202 only applies to benefits administered by the VA and ANC is operated by the Army, the federal regulations in CFR 553.15a make it clear that any former member of the Armed Forces who served on active duty (other than for training) and whose last service terminated honorably is eligible for inurnment at ANC. The only reason the WASP were not active duty at the time is because of the sexist limitations of our past, which we have now rejected. The Army's opening up of Arlington to WASPs in 2002, followed by rescinding eligibility in March 2015, only perpetuates and validates that gender discrimination. We ask you to use your authority to allow the WASPs inurnment immediately.

Arlington National Cemetery is where valor proudly sleeps. WASPs were an integral part of our victory in WWII and inspired generations of young women to become military pilots. It is unconscionable that at the same time the military is opening every position to women, the Army is closing Arlington National Cemetery to these trailblazers.

Please respond to us within 72 hours with your plan to reinstate inurnment and full military honors for the Women Airforce Service Pilots.

Sincerely,



Martha McSally
Member of Congress



Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress



Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



Brad Ashford
Member of Congress



Michael D. Bishop
Member of Congress



Thomas MacArthur
Member of Congress



David Schweikert
Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Bruce Poliquin
Member of Congress



Jackie Walorski
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Bradley Byrne
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Ann Kirkpatrick
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Diane Black
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Blake Farenthold
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Loretta Sanchez
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Beto O'Rourke

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Kay Granger
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Seth Moulton
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Todd Rokita

Todd Rokita
Member of Congress

Matt Salmon

Matt Salmon
Member of Congress

Scott H. Peters

Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



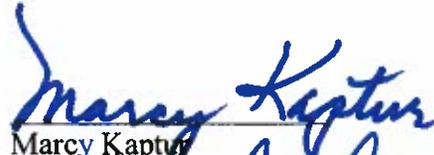
Sheila Jackson Lee
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Tom McClintock
Member of Congress



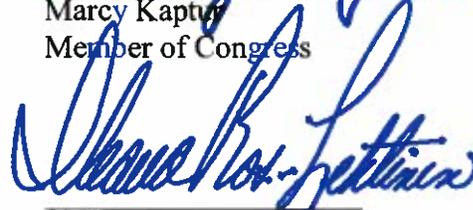
Sam Johnson
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
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Leonard Lance
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Illeana Ros-Lehtinen
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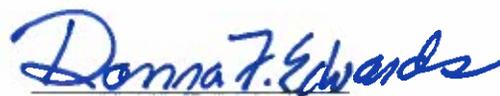
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John P. Sarbanes
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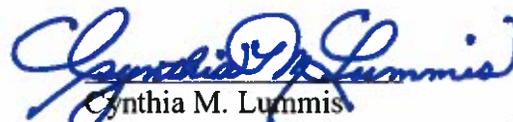
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John Garamendi
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Cynthia M. Lummis
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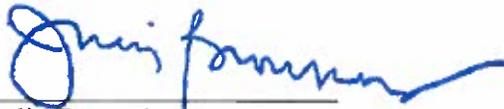
Jan Dehnam
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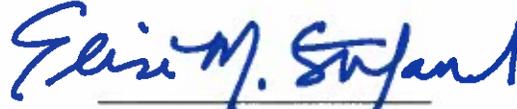
Brian Babin
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Ann McLane Kuster
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Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress



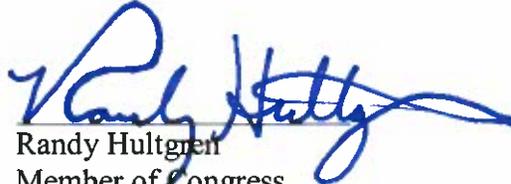
Chris Gibson
Member of Congress



Ted Poe
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Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress



Randy Hultgren
Member of Congress