

February 24, 2022

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Takano
Chairman, House Veterans Affairs Committee
The Honorable Mike Bost
Ranking Member
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Moran, Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Bost,

The 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) directed the Department of Defense to provide a plan to ensure operations at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) could continue after 2050 when space there is projected to run out. In response, a proposed rule written by the Army and published in the Federal Register suggests changing current burial regulations to require, in most cases, a Purple Heart or a Silver Star and above for burial at ANC. This selectively favors those engaged in close combat on the ground and is discriminatory by service mission, military occupation, the era of service, and gender. Suddenly, most living veterans eligible for burial at ANC, many of whom served in critical operations at sea or in the air and all but a few women—who were barred by law from service in combat occupations and units until recently—will be denied internment at ANC despite their dedication, gallant, and often dangerous service to their Country. These changes will force many to alter their end-of-life plans and deprive their family members—who often bore the hardships that accompany military life—the consolation and pride of witnessing the rendering of full military honors as the Nation's final respects to their loved one. And yet, even with these changes, ANC will eventually run out of room.

The Service Women's Action Network (SWAN) strongly recommends adding language in the FY 2023 NDAA directing the DoD and DVA to begin planning now for the designation of a second National Military Cemetery that will allow this Nation to keep the tradition of rendering full military honors to all who are currently eligible. Keeping faith with those who serve our Nation is a matter of national recognition that cannot be shrugged off. We appreciate your consideration of our request and are ready to work with you to preserve this honor for those who served.

Sincerely,



Deshauna Barber
Chief Executive Officer
Service Women's Action Network

