



Lt Gen Dana T. Atkins, USAF (Ret)
President and CEO

July 1, 2021

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chair, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chair, Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Reed and Smith, and Ranking Members Inhofe and Rogers,

On behalf of the 350,000 members of the Military Officers Association of America, I am writing to request language in the NDAA that will direct DoD to designate the location of the next national cemetery that will afford full military honors for those currently eligible and for future servicemembers. DoD has interpreted the 2019 NDAA as a directive to reduce eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery in order to keep it operational. Without congressional intervention, the change in eligibility puts the burden of a solution on the currently eligible servicemembers and their families – including those who have long had Arlington as their plan for final rest.

The proposed eligibility changes for ANC will result in the cemetery reaching capacity at some point in the future and reduce an important military benefit. This plan “kicks the can down the road” and leaves the problem for future leaders to solve. With current eligibility standards, ANC is projected to reach capacity in 2050, affording time to find an enduring solution while maintaining current eligibility standards. The currently proposed solution communicates a poor message to those who have served and those who are serving now. It will take Congress to preserve this honor for those who are currently eligible.

When published, the proposed eligibility change will limit interment to those with the Purple Heart or Silver Star and above. This change is discriminatory against past, present and future servicemembers who face danger at sea, in the air, in space, operating strategic nuclear forces, or fighting a pandemic at a medical facility. The Army has created an eligibility proposal that favors close combat specialties and does not account for our members’ plans or for future servicemembers unaware of an attempt to reduce their benefits.

The attached 2017 ANC report to Congress (3.2.2.3 Option 2C) provided a solution to designate the location for the next national cemetery and maintain current eligibility standards. As the option indicates, Congress must direct this course of action to indicate a change of intent. On behalf of our uniformed community, I request that you include language in the FY 2022 NDAA directing DoD to designate the next national cemetery

that affords full military honors and to leave unchanged the current eligibility requirements earned through military service.

Sincerely,

Dana T. Atkins