



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON
MAR 15 2016

The Honorable Jerry Moran
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Moran:

Thank you for your February 10, 2016 letter regarding the eligibility of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) for inurnment at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC).

I share your view that, as a Nation, we must honor the service and sacrifice of these women who broke down barriers and paved the way for future generations. Congress has recognized the exceptional public service provided by the WASPs and others who answered the call to duty in support of the war effort. In 1977, Congress passed a law authorizing the Secretary of Defense to determine whether their service qualified them to be considered active duty for the purposes of Veterans Administration (now Department of Veterans Affairs) (VA) benefits. By granting these individuals the benefits afforded to military Veterans, the 1977 legislation also served to remedy the lack of public recognition of the significant role the WASPs served during World War II. In 2009, Congress awarded the WASPs the Congressional Gold Medal.

The clearest and most expedient path to expanding the funeral benefits currently afforded these active-duty designees is to amend the law limiting their funeral benefits to VA National Cemeteries, as has been proposed in a number of bills pending before the Congress. The Army will support legislation making active-duty designees, including WASPs and merchant marines, eligible for above-ground inurnment in ANC, but legislation must be drafted narrowly to reduce impacts on the inurnment capacity of ANC that could substantially affect its long-term viability. Because of the capacity limitations at ANC, the Army would recommend that the proposed legislation authorizing above-ground inurnment apply only to those active-duty designees approved "as of the date of enactment of this Act," and exclude those individuals who are already formally interred or inurned. As the pending bills work their way through Congress, the Army, of course, stands ready to provide you with any technical assistance or information required. Maintaining ANC as an active military shrine and cemetery is in our national interest, and the Army will need continued Congressional support to achieve this desired result.

While legislation is pending, I would also note that there is a process authorized by statute that allows for individuals to be considered for an exception to current eligibility policies. The family of an active-duty designee may apply for an exception to policy

based on the designee's individual accomplishments. If approved, the individual would be granted above-ground inurnment at ANC.

Lastly, the ANC Advisory Committee is already studying eligibility requirements for ANC, with the goal of ensuring that ANC remains an active national military shrine for as long as possible. The committee's next public meeting is scheduled for March 15, 2016. I will ensure that the Advisory Committee, in its deliberations, specifically considers the eligibility of active-duty designees to include WASPs and merchant marines. Any changes in ANC eligibility policies recommended by the Advisory Committee and adopted by the Secretary of the Army with concurrence of the Secretary of Defense, will proceed immediately to notice and comment rulemaking to amend the current codified rules.

I sincerely appreciate your efforts to recognize the proud service of these active-duty designees, particularly the many brave women who served as WASPs, and look forward to working with you on this and other matters of importance to our Army and the Nation.

Sincerely,


Patrick J. Murphy
Acting



SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON
MAR 15 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Defense
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing regarding the eligibility of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) for inurnment at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC).

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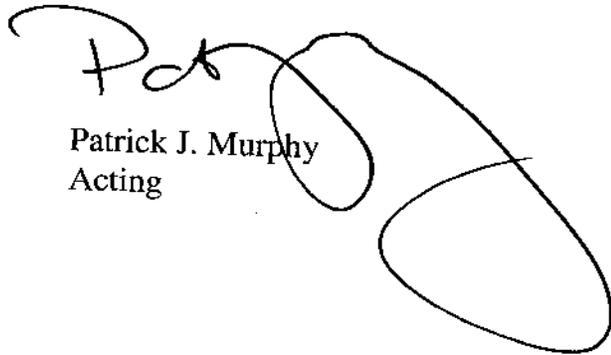
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