

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 13, 2019

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Reed, and Ranking Member Thornberry:

As you continue the process of negotiating a conference agreement on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, we respectfully request that final conference report include the text of the *World War I Valor Medals Review Act*. This bipartisan measure has earned 22 cosponsors, ten of whom serve on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and was included in the House-passed NDAA.

This bill would require the Defense Department to review the service records of African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, Jewish American, and Native American war veterans who were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross or Navy Cross or were recommended for the Medal of Honor for an action that occurred between April 6, 1917, and November 11, 1918. It would also require a review of the service record of veterans awarded the Croix de Guerre with Palm by the Government of France. Many African American World War I veterans served under French command because the U.S. military would not take them.

The bill directs the relevant service secretary to recommend veterans determined to merit the Medal of Honor as a result of the review to the Secretary of Defense, who in turn will make recommendations to the President. It also waives statutory time limits which would preclude such recommendations being made. The review will be conducted in coordination with the Valor Medals Review Task Force, a project of the Congressionally-established World War I Centennial Commission, which will raise private funds to complete the project. The Department will only be required to review cases recommended by the Task Force.

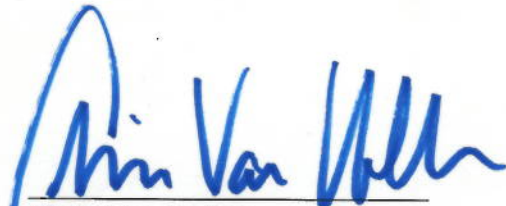
This legislation is supported by the VFW, the American Legion, the Association of the United States Army, the Congressional Black Caucus Veteran's Braintrust, the Air Force Association, the American GI Forum, AMSUS the Society of Federal Health Professionals, the Army Aviation Association of America, the Association of the United States Navy, the Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service, the Fleet Reserve Association, the IAVA, the Jewish War Veterans of the USA, the Marine Corps League, the Military Chaplains Association of the USA, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the MOAA, the Naval Enlisted Reserve Association, the Reserve Officers Association, the Retired Enlisted Association, the Service Women's Action Network, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, the US Army Warrant Officers Association, the US Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association, the Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Wounded Warrior Project.

This legislation as introduced was included in the House-passed NDAA. On the Senate side, our staffs have engaged in extensive consultation with the Defense Department and have agreed to multiple amendments to address potential areas of concern.


Given the longstanding precedent of Congressionally-authorized valor medals reviews and the strong bipartisan support for this review and the work of the Valor Medals Review Task Force, we respectfully request that final conference report include the text of the *World War I Valor Medals Review Act*.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,




Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



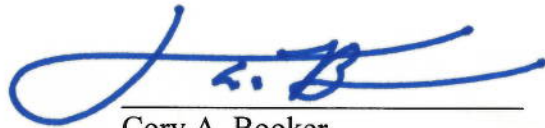
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



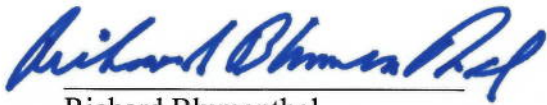
Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator