

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 10, 2020

The Honorable Jim 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 Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

We write to request that the conference report of the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA) include a provision to require the Department of Defense (DoD, or the Department) rename all property and other assets owned by the Department named in honor of Confederate officers.

As you know, both the Senate and House versions of the FY21 NDAA contain provisions requiring the Secretary of Defense to rename all military property, including the ten Army installations,¹ named in honor of Confederate officers. Section 2829 of the House bill² requires the renaming process to be complete within one year, while Section 377 of the Senate bill³ authorizes a three-year period for completing renaming. Both provisions mandate that the Secretary establish a formal process for cataloging all assets to be renamed and for determining new names.

The Senate and House strongly supported the inclusion of this requirement by passing their bills with overwhelming, veto-proof, bipartisan majorities.⁴ The requirement also received bipartisan support in committee markups. Despite the widespread support for this proposal,

¹ New York Times, "These Are the 10 U.S. Army Installations Named for Confederates," Michael Levenson, June 11, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/11/us/military-bases-confederates.html>

² FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act, H.R. 6395, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6395>

³ FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act, S. 4049, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/4049>

⁴ Senate Roll Call Vote No. 140, https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=116&session=2&vote=00140 and House of Representatives Roll Call Vote No. 152, <https://clerk.house.gov/Votes/2020152>.

Chairman Inhofe has declared his intention to strip it out behind closed doors in conference, saying “We’re going to see to it that provision doesn’t survive the bill... I’m not going to say how at this point.”⁵

We strongly oppose removing this provision and respectfully request the conferees to retain in the conference report the provision endorsed by both chambers: a requirement for the Department to rename all military assets named for the Confederacy no later than three years after the date of enactment.

Millions of servicemembers of color have lived on, trained at, and deployed from installations named to honor traitors that killed Americans in defense of chattel slavery. Renaming these bases does not disrespect our military – it honors the sacrifices and contributions of our servicemembers in a way that better reflects our nation’s diversity and values. We know who these bases were named for and why they were named. It is long past the time to correct this longstanding, historic injustice. We must not shrink from our solemn duty in his moment.

Sincerely,

_____/s/
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

_____/s/
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

_____/s/
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

_____/s/
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

_____/s/
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

_____/s/
Chris Murphy
United States Senator

_____/s/
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

_____/s/
Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

⁵ Politico, “Top senator says Congress shouldn’t remove Confederate names from bases,” Connor O’Brien, July 24, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/24/inhofe-congress-confederate-names-bases-381192>.

_____/s/_____
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Ron Wyden
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Tina Smith
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Robert Menendez
United States Senator

_____/s/
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

_____/s/
Patty Murray
United States Senator

_____/s/
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

_____/s/
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

_____/s/
Tom Udall
United States Senator

_____/s/
Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

_____/s/
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

_____/s/
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

_____/s/
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

_____/s/
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

_____/s/
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

_____/s/
Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

_____/s/
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

_____/s/
Doug Jones
United States Senator

_____/s/
Brian Schatz
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, House Minority Leader
The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader