

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin, III
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

Nearly 1.8 million courageous Americans valiantly served in theater during the Korean War,¹ and their legacy of service and sacrifice is enshrined in the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Since the Memorial's dedication on July 27, 1995, millions of visitors have paid tribute to the bravery of our Korean War veterans. In 2016, Congress authorized a new Wall of Remembrance (Remembrance Wall) to honor more than 36,000 American servicemembers who died in theater in support of what is often called "The Forgotten War." The intent of the Remembrance Wall is to "eternally honor the brave Americans who gave their lives in defense of freedom during the Korean War",² ensuring that their sacrifices are not forgotten.

Recent reports, however, claim that the newly unveiled Remembrance Wall may contain more than 1,000 spelling errors and hundreds of additional inaccuracies.³ As part of the law enacting the Remembrance Wall, Congress directed the Department of Defense (DOD) to develop criteria for including names on the Remembrance Wall and transmit a complete, accurate list based on such criteria to the Department of the Interior (DOI).⁴ The law also prohibited the use of federal funds to construct the Remembrance Wall.⁵ A non-profit organization, the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation (Foundation), constructed the wall using official information from DOD for the names of the fallen and worked with DOI for the design and placement of the Remembrance Wall.⁶ Discrepancies related to the number of names listed on the Remembrance Wall for both American veterans and members of the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army remain today on the websites of DOD, DOI, and the Foundation.⁷

¹ U.S. DEP'T OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, *America's Wars* (May 2021)
https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_americas_wars.pdf.

² CONG. REC. VOL. 162, NO. 29 (Feb. 24, 2016) (statement of Rep. Sam Johnson),
<https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-162/issue-29/house-section/article/H877-1>.

³ Dave Philipps, *A Korean War Wall of Remembrance Set Hundreds of Errors in Stone*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 11, 2023,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/09/us/korean-war-memorial-wall-names.html>.

⁴ Pub. L. No. 114-230.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation, <https://koreanwarvetsmemorial.org/our-progress>.

⁷ U.S. DEP'T OF DEFENSE, *Take a look inside the Korean War Veterans Memorial*,
<https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Experience/Korean-War-Memorial> (website references 36,574 American servicemembers and "more than 7,200 members of the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army"); NAT'L PARK SERVICE, <https://www.nps.gov/kowa/learn/historyculture/korean-war-overview.htm> (website references 33,686

Errors of this magnitude should not have made it past the initial blueprints, much less carved into stone, and certainly not erected and unveiled to the public. We find these errors deeply concerning and write to seek accountability on how the Remembrance Wall's glaring flaws went unnoticed until post-construction.

In the words of the late sponsor of the authorizing legislation and Korean War veteran, Representative Sam Johnson, "the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance would eternally honor the brave Americans who gave their lives in defense of freedom during the Korean War. . . as a visual record of their sacrifice."⁸ We find it unfortunate that what should have been a touching tribute for bereaved family members and a grateful nation has turned into an embarrassing gaffe. We must take the necessary steps to correct the issue, find the communication and research flaws that caused the errors, and ensure such errors are never repeated.

To assist the Committees with their oversight activities, please schedule a briefing with the Committees and produce the following, as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m., March 23, 2023:

1. A document sufficient to describe the process used by the Department of Defense to provide the lists of names for inclusion in the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance to the Department of the Interior and the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation.
2. A document sufficient to describe the dates on which the lists of names for inclusion in the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance to the Department of the Interior and the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation were transmitted and the corresponding lists provided. Please include a description of all errors or inaccuracies in the list of names transmitted to the Foundation for inscription on the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance.
3. A document sufficient to explain the Department of Defense's plan to provide a revised and accurate list of names for inclusion in the Korean War Veterans Memorial Wall of Remembrance to the Department of the Interior and the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation.

American servicemembers); and Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation, <https://koreanwarvetsemorial.org/our-progress> (website references 36,634 American servicemembers and 7,174 members of the Korean Augmentation to the U.S. Army).

⁸ CONG. REC., *supra* note 2.

Secretary Lloyd J. Austin, III

March 2, 2023

Page 3

Please deliver your response to room 1324 of the Longworth House Office Building. The Committees prefer, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format.

Please contact the House Committee on Natural Resources Majority Staff (HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov) and Minority Staff (NRDems@mail.house.gov), Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Majority Staff (David_Brooks@energy.senate.gov) and Minority Staff (John_Tanner@energy.senate.gov), House Committee on Armed Services Majority Staff (Ryan.Breitenbach@mail.house.gov), and Senate Committee on Armed Services Minority Staff (Katie_Magnus@armed-services.senate.gov). Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



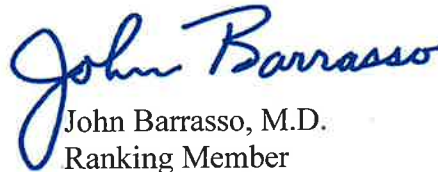
Bruce Westerman
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources



Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources



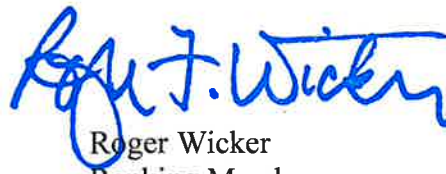
Joe Manchin III
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources



John Barrasso, M.D.
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources



Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services



Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services