

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4781

To prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from authorizing honor guards to participate in funerals of veterans interred in national cemeteries unless the honor guards agree to offer veterans' families the option of having the honor guard perform a 13-fold flag recitation, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 18, 2007

Mr. BROUN of Georgia (for himself, Mr. PITTS, Mr. KINGSTON, Mr. SHAD-EGG, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mrs. MYRICK, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. GINGREY, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Ms. FOXX, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. WOLF, Mr. DEAL of Georgia, Mr. LINDER, Mr. WELDON of Florida, Mr. FEENEY, Mrs. MUSGRAVE, Mr. GOOD-LATTE, Mr. ISSA, Mrs. BACHMANN, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. HERGER, Mr. WAMP, Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. FORTUÑO, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. DOOLITTLE, Mr. KUHLMAN of New York, Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. PENCE, Mr. SALLI, Mr. KING of Iowa, Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina, Mr. ROSKAM, and Mr. PRICE of Georgia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from authorizing honor guards to participate in funerals of veterans interred in national cemeteries unless the honor guards agree to offer veterans' families the option of having the honor guard perform a 13-fold flag recitation, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 Congress makes the following findings:

5 (1) The National Cemetery Administration of
6 the Department of Veterans Affairs (hereinafter re-
7 ferred to as the “NCA”) honors veterans with final
8 resting places in national shrines and with lasting
9 tributes that commemorate their service to the Na-
10 tion.

11 (2) The NCA currently maintains more than
12 2,800,000 grave sites at 125 national cemeteries in
13 39 States and Puerto Rico.

14 (3) In fiscal year 2006, nearly 97,000 inter-
15 ments were conducted at national cemeteries.

16 (4) In fiscal year 2006, nearly 72 percent of in-
17 terments were at the Nation’s 20 busiest national
18 cemeteries in Riverside, California, Florida, Calver-
19 ton, New York, Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, Fort
20 Snelling, Minnesota, Fort Sam Houston, Texas,
21 Fort Logan, Colorado, Willamette, Oregon, Dallas-
22 Fort Worth, Texas, National Memorial Cemetery of
23 Arizona, Houston, Texas, Fort Rosecrans, Cali-
24 fornia, Abraham Lincoln, Illinois, Tahoma, Wash-
25 ington, Massachusetts, San Joaquin Valley, Cali-

1 fornia, Long Island, New York, Indiantown Gap,
2 Pennsylvania, Ohio Western Reserve, and Great
3 Lakes, Michigan.

4 (5) Section 1491 of title 10, United States
5 Code, requires, upon a family's request, that every
6 eligible veteran receive a military funeral honors
7 ceremony, to include folding and presenting the
8 United States burial flag and the playing of Taps,
9 and the law further stipulates that veterans' organi-
10 zations may assist in providing military funeral hon-
11 ors.

12 (6) The folding and presentation of the United
13 States flag is a solemn and important moment for
14 families of the deceased, and can be done in silence
15 or accompanied by a recitation of the 13 steps taken
16 to fold the flag and the meaning behind each step.

17 (7) Veterans' service organizations across the
18 Nation often provide funeral honors at national
19 cemeteries, including the folding and presentation of
20 the flag, the recitation of the flag-folding steps and
21 the playing of Taps.

22 (8) The recitation of the flag-folding steps
23 should be proactively offered to the families rather
24 than waiting for a request.

1 (9) The choice to have the flag-folding cere-
2 mony read aloud should rest with the family of the
3 deceased, not the NCA.

4 **SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS REQUIRE-**
5 **MENT WITH RESPECT TO OFFERING OF 13-**
6 **FOLD FLAG RECITATION AT FUNERALS OF**
7 **VETERANS IN NATIONAL CEMETERIES.**

8 The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may not authorize
9 an honor guard to participate in the funeral of any veteran
10 interred in a national cemetery under the control of the
11 National Cemetery Administration unless the honor guard
12 agrees to offer to the family of each veteran in whose fu-
13 neral the honor guard chooses to participate the option
14 of having the honor guard perform one of the 13-fold flag
15 recitations.

16 **SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

17 It is the sense of Congress that 13-fold flag recita-
18 tions are a historical tradition, and that it should be the
19 policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs to authorize
20 honor guards to participate in the funerals of veterans and
21 proactively offer such a recitation to the family of each
22 veteran.

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