



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0906

May 22, 2023

The Honorable Denis R. McDonough
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough,

We write to express our deep concerns regarding the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System's (CTVHCS) decision to remove a cross bearing the emblems of our military branches and the words, "Remember our Veterans" from the lobby of a clinic in Austin, Texas.¹ Reports indicate CTVHCS took this step following a complaint that the display somehow violated the U.S. Constitution. CTVHCS's decision exhibits remarkable disregard for the First Amendment and hostility toward basic military history and the traditions of the United States. We call on you to immediately reverse this decision.

From the Distinguished Service Cross established in 1918² to the Air Force Cross in 1960,³ our country has used the symbol of the cross to honor U.S. military personnel for over a century. Arlington National Cemetery is also home to at least two beloved cross memorials to the nation's fallen: the Argonne Cross, dedicated in 1923,⁴ and the Canadian Cross of Sacrifice, dedicated in 1927.⁵ If a cross can adorn the uniforms of the most heroic among us and can stand on the hallowed grounds of Arlington it certainly should be welcomed and honored at the VA clinic in Austin.

The greatest members of our founding understood that the religious and moral nature of America's heritage was critical to this Republic's preservation and to our veterans and men and women in the Armed Forces. America's first President George Washington famously said, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports."⁶ As Commander in Chief of the Continental Army years before, he similarly implored his troops, "While we are zealously performing the duties of good citizens and soldiers we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of Religion."⁷ Attempts to sterilize the public square – in this case a clinic that provides medical care to the veterans that sacrificed for our Republic – of all symbols of Christianity flies in the face of the very founding of our nation.

Out of reverence for our country's military history and longstanding traditions — out of respect for the veterans who have borne the battle for this Republic, its principles, and the freedom it guards — we request that you *immediately* return the cross to its original display. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Chip Roy
Member of Congress

Keith Self
Member of Congress

Morgan Luttrell
Member of Congress

¹ [Texas VA clinic removes 'Remember Our Veterans' metal cross after watchdog complains - Washington Times](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/health/wp/2023/05/22/texas-va-clinic-removes-remember-our-veterans-metal-cross-after-watchdog-complains/)

² AMEDD Center of History and Heritage, <https://achh.army.mil/regiment/root-cross>

³ Air Force Cross, Air Force's Personnel Center, <https://www.afpc.af.mil/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/421871/air-force-cross/>

⁴ Argonne Cross (World War I), Arlington National Cemetery, <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Monuments-and-Memorials/Argonne-Cross>

⁵ Canadian Cross of Sacrifice, Arlington National Cemetery, <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Monuments-and-Memorials/Canadian-Cross>

⁶ <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/farewell-address>

⁷ <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-15-02-0016>



Monica De La Cruz
Member of Congress



Pete Sessions
Member of Congress



Nathaniel Moran
Member of Congress



Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress



Brian Babin, D.D. S.
Member of Congress



Ronny L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Lance Gooden
Member of Congress



Matthew M. Rosendale, Sr.
Member of Congress



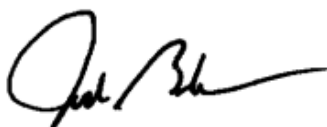
Bill Johnson
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Bob Good
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