

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 11, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

Over the past weeks, the protests and demonstrations in the wake of the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police as well as the brutal murder of Ahmaud Arbery have underlined the urgent necessity of confronting America's history of racism against Black Americans. In that spirit, we write in support of a proposal recently adopted by the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) in the markup of the *Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA) that would remove all names, symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederacy from military bases and other property of the Department of Defense (DoD).

It is unacceptable that over 155 years after the end of the Civil War, at least ten United States Army bases¹ and other property of the Armed Forces bear names of officers who served in the Confederacy. In the words of Confederate Vice President Alexander H. Stephens, the Confederacy was founded upon the idea that African-Americans were "not equal to the white man" and that "slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition."² The Confederacy remains a haunting symbol of white supremacy, Jim Crow segregation, racial terror, and the systematic subjugation of Black people, which are antithetical to the values of our military and our country. It is long past time for the United States military to cease honoring, commemorating, or otherwise celebrating those who took up arms against the United States in the Civil War, sacrificing hundreds of thousands of American lives in order to preserve the institution of chattel slavery.

We are deeply troubled by your recent tweets stating you "will not even consider" the renaming of these bases because they are "part of a Great American Heritage, and a history of Winning, Victory, and Freedom."³ Your rejection of this proposal reflects a profound misunderstanding of this moment in our nation's history, when Americans are demanding that we reckon with a centuries-old legacy of systemic racism and our military leaders recognize that condoning Confederate symbols undermines their mission and unit cohesion.⁴ Renaming these

¹ The Atlantic, "Take the Confederate Names Off Our Army Bases," David Petraeus, June 9, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/take-confederate-names-off-our-army-bases/612832/>.

² U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, "How Congress Abolished Slavery and Created a Modern America," Paul Finkelman, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2017/winter/summer-of-1862>.

³ Tweets by President Donald J. Trump, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1270787978626052096?s=20>.

⁴ General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, "A Letter from the Commandant," April 20, 2020, <https://mca-marines.org/wp-content/uploads/CMC-Letter-R1.pdf>.

installations does not disrespect our military; rather, it addresses a long-standing harm and provides a long overdue opportunity to honor the sacrifices and contributions of our service members in a way that better reflects our nation's diversity and values.

As President and Commander-in-Chief, we urge you to stand on the right side of history and support the SASC-adopted proposal to remove all names, symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederacy from bases and other property of the U.S. military.

Sincerely,

_____/s/
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

_____/s/
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

_____/s/
Jack Reed
United States Senator

_____/s/
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

_____/s/
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

_____/s/
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

_____/s/
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

_____/s/
Tim Kaine
United States Senator

_____/s/
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

_____/s/
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

_____/s/
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

_____/s/
Doug Jones
United States Senator