

VA Hospital Removes Cross Display Resulting in Furor from Lawmakers

House Republicans, led by Rep. Chip Roy of Texas have drafted a letter demanding a cross display at the Austin, Texas, veterans hospital be restored to its previous position.

The letter is addressed to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis R. McDonough to address concern for why it was removed in the first place:

“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. 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,” the letter reads.

The cross holds the emblems of the U.S. military branches and has been the focal point of multiple service medals awarded to distinguished military members over the course of decades:

“From the Distinguished Service Cross established in 1918 to the Air Force Cross in 1960, 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, and the Canadian Cross of Sacrifice, dedicated in 1927. 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,” continues the letter.

Addressing the history behind the cross, the 17 House members attempted to get the Secretary to understand the significance behind the cross and its relevance to soul of America:

“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.’ 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.’ 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,” the letter explains.

Sadly, it should not take a group of 17 representatives to explain what the cross means not only to the government of the United States, but specifically to the members of the military.

All one must do to understand even remotely how important the cross is to many service members past and present is travel to the Arlington National Cemetery and look out over the countless headstones emblazoned with various forms of the one, true cross.

“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," the letter concludes.

Time will tell if the letter will have an impact and the cross is restored to where it is so desperately needed, for the hope it brings to those who served this country and are in need of care. {eoa}

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