

## National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces

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### **Pausing during Veterans Day to Support Military Chaplains and the Updating of Chaplains Hill Monuments at Arlington National Cemetery**

“There is a special esteem that military families attribute to military chaplains,” notes Rabbi Harold Robinson, Ch, RADM, USN, (Ret.), a long term and former military chaplain. “We know that as part of Joe Biden’s legacy, he would like to complete the tribute to military chaplains as planned for Arlington National Cemetery. We encourage support to get this done.”

As we celebrate Veterans Day, it is a worthy time to mention that the project is an effort to add the 81 names of the Protestant and Catholic Memorials on Chaplains Hill on Section 2 of Arlington National Cemetery. This would honor and include the chaplains who died in service from Korea to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF), NCMAF’s membership is comprised of nearly 150 religious organizations who endorse military and Veterans Affairs hospital chaplains.

The enhancement of the Memorials has been endorsed by the American Legion Executive Committee, the Association of the US Army, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Navy League Council of NY.

Approved by two acts of Congress, with staunch support from both sides of the aisle, and signed by President Biden, the National Defense Authorization Acts of 2021 and 20222 contained a passage providing the NCMAF authority to upgrade this monument. The office of the Secretary of the Army, which has oversight of Arlington Cemetery, has not implemented the directives of Congress and the approval of the President.

In 2011, the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) led the effort to donate a monument to Jewish chaplains on Arlington Cemetery section two. The committee then proposed to upgrade the Protestant Memorial with a granite headstone, replacing the crumbling concrete headstone and making a new bronze plaque that included the missing chaplain’s names. This committee has diligently, respectfully, and repeatedly sought to upgrade the memorial at no cost to the taxpayers. Yet, no action has been taken to update the monuments.

NCMAF has the financing and materials to update the monument at no cost to the Government or Arlington Cemetery. It would replace the aging concrete Protestant Chaplains Monument with a new granite piece in the same shape and size as the

current one. The Dignity Memorial Company has agreed to donate the new granite monument and provide installation.

Three military religious leaders call for action.

“It is disconcerting and disappointing that this project has stalled. Given the authorization on Capitol Hill and the consent of The White House, the Secretary of the Army and her department has not approved this effort to secure the memory of our fallen clergy,” said The Right Reverend Derek Jones, Bishop of the Armed Forces & Chaplaincy and Chair of the NCMAF Board of Directors. “The President and Congress have indicated they want to honor these heroes.”

Rabbi Harold Robinson, Ch, RADM, USN, (Ret.) shared, “There is no question that the American people value and appreciate the brave efforts of our fallen chaplains. The NCMAF strongly urges officials at Arlington Cemetery and the Secretary of the Army comply with the law and honor the brave religious leaders who paid the ultimate sacrifice.”

“At this somber time of Veterans Day, it seems appropriate to secure the memory of these fallen military chaplains who paid the ultimate price with their lives,” said Father Robert R. Cannon, Ch, Col, USAF (Ret.), Catholic representative to the NCMAF.

To urge your congressperson to take action, visit <https://tinyurl.com/5n6u87v6>.

The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) is the umbrella organization for 150 U.S. faith groups and the professional clergy representatives who endorse Military and V.A. chaplains. It has erected several monuments on Chaplains Hill in Arlington National Cemetery honoring chaplains who have perished while in our Nation’s service. During the last 75 years, monuments were placed to honor Roman Catholic and Jewish chaplains, reflecting the ongoing sacrifice of these warriors of faith. More information about the NCMAF, visit the organization’s website <https://www.ncmaf.com/> or the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/NCMAF> .