

Park University Spearheads Effort of Congress-Led Systematic Review of Minorities Being Denied Medal of Honor

House of Representatives and Senate Have Introduced Bipartisan Bills

PARKVILLE, MISSOURI, USA, April 18, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate have introduced separate bills to require the systematic review of minority veterans who served in World War I. Park University has been the driving force behind the bipartisan bills introduced in Congress on [April 10 \(H.R.2249\)](#) and [April 11 \(S.1218\)](#).



The Valor Medals Review is being conducted by the University's [George S. Robb Centre for the Study of the Great War](#) and the Valor Medals Review Task Force which was formed in August 2018 in conjunction with the Foundation for the Commemoration of the World Wars on behalf of the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission.

The legislation, if signed into law, will require the Department of Defense to carry out a systematic review of select members of the U.S. Armed Forces, who, in spite of valorous deeds, may have been denied the Medal of Honor due to race. The bills also waive the statute of limitations associated with any cases identified by the review, authorizing the award of a Medal of Honor to any individuals identified by the DOD in the study.

To be eligible for the review, a veteran must have received a Distinguished Service Cross and/or received/been recommended for a Medal of Honor or the French Croix de Guerre with palm. Additionally, the veteran must be African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic-American, Jewish-American or Native American. With the exception of Native Americans, this criteria is based exactly on existing precedent used by Congress since the beginning of the systematic reviews in the 1990s. Though excluded by the World War II and later reviews, Native Americans are included in this review as their World War I service predates the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 (also known as the Snyder Act).

The Valor Medals Review Task Force is comprised of volunteer scholars and veterans prepared to complete the records collection phase of the project using private donations, precluding the need for government appropriation to finance the most costly and time-consuming aspects of the effort. In its first eight months of operation, the Task Force has been endorsed by the two largest veteran service organizations in the nation — the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars — as well as by more than a dozen other veteran and military service organizations, the grandson of Alvin Cullum York (known as Sergeant York) and three retired flag officers.

The VMRTF's research team is chaired by Timothy Westcott, Ph.D., associate professor of history at Park University and director of Park's George S. Robb Centre for the Study of the Great War, and Jeffrey Sammons, Ph.D., professor of history at New York University. The Centre's namesake, a 1912 Park University graduate, was a white officer in the "Harlem Hellfighters" (the mostly black 369th Regiment of New York), a World War I hero and a 1919 Medal of Honor recipient.

Despite comprising two combat divisions, including the "Harlem Hellfighters," which logged more combat days and casualties than any other American regiment, none of the more than 367,000 African-Americans soldiers who served in the World War I received the Medal of Honor.

The House of Representatives bill, which has been referred to the House Committee on Armed Services, is sponsored by J. French Hill, (R-Ark.), and co-sponsored by Emanuel Cleaver (D-Mo.), Sam Graves, (R-Mo.) and Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.). The Senate bill, which has been referred to the Senate Committee on Armed Services, is sponsored by Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), and co-sponsored by Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) and Tim Scott (R-S.C.).

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