



Office of Representative Heath Shuler

Representing North Carolina's Eleventh Congressional District

For Immediate Release

October 30, 2007

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Rep. Shuler Leads Call for End to VA Policy Banning Traditional Flag-Folding Recitations

Washington, D.C. – Representative Heath Shuler today announced that he has authored a letter to the Acting Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs concerning recently announced policies banning the traditional flag-folding recitations by Memorial Honor Detail volunteers.

When folding the flag that had covered the coffin Memorial Honor Detail volunteers would recite the significance of each fold. The flag contains 13 folds. The 11th fold glorifies, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The 12th glorifies, "God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

Rep. Shuler's letter asked that the Acting Secretary reconsider the policy and allow the Memorial Honor Detail volunteers to perform the traditional flag-folding recitation if requested by the family of the deceased. He also pointed out that the ability to have the recitations made by the Memorial Honor Detail was important to recognizing the right to freedom of speech and religion for which the veteran had fought.

The entire text of the letter is below. It was co-signed by Rep. Chris Carney (D-PA), Brad Ellsworth (D-IN), Baron Hill (D-IN), Tim Holden (D-PA), Nick Lampson (D-TX), Jim Marshall (D-GA), Jim Matheson (D-UT), Mike McIntyre (D-NC), Mike Ross (D-AR) Gene Taylor (D-MS), and John Tanner (D-TN).

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October 30th, 2007

The Honorable Gordon H. Mansfield
Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Acting Secretary Mansfield:

We are writing to express our concern regarding recently announced policies banning the traditional flag-folding recitations by Memorial Honor Detail volunteers.

The flag folding recitation is a longstanding tradition which brings comfort to the living and honor to the deceased. The recitations accompanying each fold pay tribute to the service and sacrifice of our veterans and their families, the nation they proudly serve, and the beliefs that they hold dear.

As our nation loses 1,500 World War II veterans every day, we feel it is vital to ensure that the final rites for these American heroes be permitted to include the freedoms of speech and religious expression enshrined in our Constitution and defended by their service.

We ask that you please reconsider the policy and allow the Memorial Honor Detail volunteers to perform the traditional flag-folding recitation if requested by the family of the deceased. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please contact Sean O'Brien in Congressman Shuler's office at (202) 225-6401.

Sincerely,