



Commissioned Officers Association

of the U.S. Public Health Service

October 11, 2019

The Hon. Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

Perhaps you remember me from when we presented you with our 2018 Congressional Public Health Leadership Award. We recognized you for your support of public health and the Commissioned Corps of the USPHS.

Over the past year I have been working with both Spencer Knoll and Alyssa Penn of your staff as we attempted to persuade the Smithsonian to include the USPHS and NOAA in the design of their National Native American Veterans memorial, currently being constructed on the Mall.

For reasons we do not understand, the Smithsonian has decided that there are two different kinds of Native American veterans: ones they want to honor and ones they don't. The latter includes veterans who earned their status through service in the USPHS and NOAA.

We have written to the current Secretary three times, and he has not given us a response. We have written to the Smithsonian Regents—all of them—and they have not responded.

Meanwhile, the Smithsonian continues to build the memorial with a design which does not include either the USPHS or NOAA. Maryland has more USPHS officers resident in it than any other state. NOAA headquarters and USPHS headquarters are in Maryland. These are your constituents who are being dishonored. We count on you to step in and tell the Smithsonian to correct the design of the memorial.

Respectfully,

Col. James T. Currie, USA (ret.)
Executive Director