



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

Office of the Director

September 28, 2018

Col. James T. Currie, USA (ret.)
Executive Director
Commissioned Officers Association
U.S. Public Health Service
8201 Corporate Drive, Suite 1170
Landover, MD 20785

Dear Col. Currie,

Thank you for your recent letter requesting that the design for the National Native American Veterans Memorial include the logos of the United States Public Health Service (PHS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and thank you for your service among those ranks.

The legislation establishing the National Native American Veterans Memorial specifically addresses Native American Veterans of the “Armed Forces of the United States” typically defined as the Army, Navy, Marines Corp, Air Force, and Coast Guard. It does not make mention of the “Uniformed Services of the United States”, which would then include U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Commissioned Officer Corps. It is clear in the statute that Congress intended the five armed branches, and we are compelled to follow that intent.

We took great care to ensure Native American Veterans had an opportunity to provide feedback and suggestions in the design of the Memorial. The two year process included consultation with tribal governments and Native American veterans. We held thirty-five meetings throughout the country, and at no point in this process did any of the thousand participants raise the issue of including NOAA or USPHS.

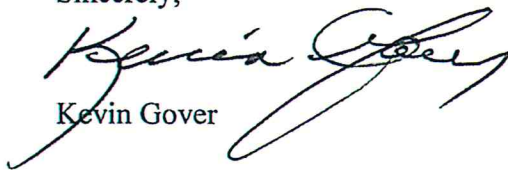
Given your impassioned efforts, I sought the scholarly advice of our veterans’ advisory committee. The advisory committee consists of veterans of the five armed services and family members of such veterans. They were unanimous on two points: first, that the service of the commissioned corps of USPHS and NOAA was both honorable and deserving of recognition; and second, that this Memorial is to honor Native veterans of the Armed Forces, and NOAA and USPHS officers do not fall within its scope. I support their conclusion.

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The intent of Congress is clear from the statute, and the National Museum of the American Indian does not have the authority to expand the scope of the Memorial beyond the Armed Forces. Congress, however, can change the scope by amending the statute, and we would be happy to implement what Congress instructs. In the absence of such statutory amendments, we must proceed based on the current statute.

Thank you for taking the time to express your concerns to me and your interest in the National Native American Veterans Memorial.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Gover", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name "Kevin Gover".

Kevin Gover