



## Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service

October 30, 2018

The Hon. David J. Skorton  
Secretary, The Smithsonian Institution  
600 Maryland Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Secretary Skorton:

The organization which I serve as Executive Director is a non-partisan, non-profit entity which has represented the uniformed officers of the US Public Health Service (USPHS) since 1951. I don't know how much you know about the USPHS, but it is one of the seven federal uniformed services of our country and has existed in its present form since 1889. Its members deploy to the sites of natural and manmade disasters in our country and fight disease throughout the world. It is by far the most diverse of the uniformed services, with a majority of women in its ranks. It is also the uniformed service with the highest percentage of Native American officers, with Native Americans comprising almost 800 of its 6500 total. All of the officers in the USPHS are veterans under federal law, entitled to all the rights, privileges, and benefits thereof.

One right that it apparently does not have, however, is that of having its logo represented in the design of the Smithsonian's National Native American Veterans Memorial. When the design of this to-be-built memorial was revealed in June of this year, it quickly became apparent that the designer had been told to omit the logos of both the USPHS and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). We understand how this happened, because the law that authorized the memorial refers to "veterans of the armed forces," and neither USPHS nor NOAA officers are part of the armed forces. I have researched the legislative history of this bill, however, and it is clear to me that the sponsors of this legislation back in 1994 intended for it to be a memorial to all Native American veterans. The use of the term "veterans of the armed forces" is often used inadvertently by bill drafters on the Hill because neither the USPHS nor NOAA Commissioned Corps are well known to Congressional staff or members.

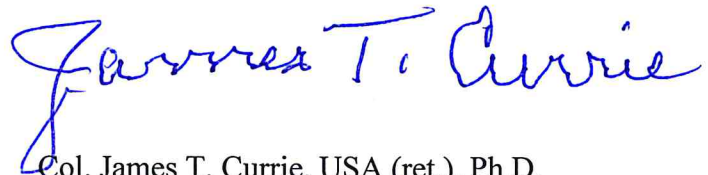
We have reached out to Museum Director Gover and suggested to him that he has the leeway to expand the memorial to include both the USPHS and NOAA logos in it. We believe there would be no objection from the relevant Congressional committees if he were to do so. If he is unwilling to follow our advice and believes that the law needs to be changed to include the USPHS and NOAA in its language, we have offered to work with him to make this happen.

**Commissioned Officers Association**  
of the U.S. Public Health Service

We are writing to you today to ask that you become involved in this matter as an expression of Smithsonian inclusiveness. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you.

Please feel free to contact me at [jcurrie@coausphs.org](mailto:jcurrie@coausphs.org) or 301 731-9080.

Sincerely,



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