



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

APR 09 2019

David J. Skorton, M.D.
Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution
600 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Secretary Skorton:

I recently learned the Smithsonian will be constructing a National Native American Veterans Memorial at the National Museum of the American Indian. Native Americans serve in the uniformed services at significantly higher rates than other ethnic groups. As Secretary of Health and Human Services, I oversee the women and men of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps (Corps), one of the seven uniformed services.

The USPHS has a long history of service to our country. During times of militarization of the Corps, officers served alongside military forces in WWI and WWII under 42 U.S.C. § 213. Currently, over twenty-five percent of the Corps have prior military service with the Department of Defense (DOD). Additionally, Corps officers proudly serve in the Indian Health Service, providing critical care to underserved populations.

The USPHS is especially meaningful to me because one of the very first people my grandfather met upon arriving at Ellis Island in 1920 was a uniformed member of the USPHS who performed his physical examination. Recently, I presided over the 2017 Hurricane Response Joint Services Award Ceremony, where the DOD awarded more than 1,400 Corps officers with the Joint Services Humanitarian Services Medal. This distinguished honor recognizes superior humanitarian efforts by both the DOD and the Corps in the wake of hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. Upon learning that the proposed design for the National Native American Veterans Memorial will omit the logo of the USPHS, I felt compelled to write you.

I understand that the 1994 law authorizing the National Native American Veterans Memorial used the term "veterans of the armed forces" but this does not preclude the inclusion of the USPHS logo on the memorial. Please reconsider adding the USPHS logo to the design. I believe including the USPHS logo is warranted and appropriate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alex M. Azar II".

Alex M. Azar II