

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 16, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to express our deep concern regarding an unjust error that has deprived the late World War II Corporal Waverly B. Woodson, Jr. of the great honor that he and his family deserve.

Since its conception in the early 1860s, nearly 3,500 American heroes have been presented with the Medal of Honor, one of our nation's most prestigious awards. The Medal of Honor was designed to acknowledge service members who have demonstrated incredible bravery and unwavering commitment to our country. Throughout history, recipients have put their lives at risk to protect others and to defend American values.

Today, we take time to recognize a forgotten hero. Cpl. Woodson served as an Army medic assigned to the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, the only all-Black unit to storm the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944. When German troops attacked the transport boat where he and other members of his battalion were positioned, Cpl. Woodson disregarded his own shrapnel wounds and established a medical station. As the battle raged on, Cpl. Woodson worked for 30 hours to remove injured soldiers from harm's way and perform grueling medical procedures, including an amputation.

We believe that Cpl. Woodson's strength and courage embody the spirit of the Medal of Honor. And, documentation procured by historians such as Linda Hervieux suggests that high ranking officers felt similarly at the time. In a memorandum to the Roosevelt White House, War Department aide Phillio Nash disclosed that Cpl. Woodson's Commanding Officer first recommended him for a Distinguished Service Cross before the office of U.S. General John C. H. Lee recommended Cpl. Woodson for a "Congressional medal" presented by the President. This description could only denote the Medal of Honor. Yet, Cpl. Woodson never received this recognition. Instead, Cpl. Woodson's service record indicates that his heroism was overlooked due to the color of his skin. This is an insult to the sacrifices Cpl. Woodson made for our country.

As you may know, 52 Members of Congress, led by Senator Chris Van Hollen and the Congressional Black Caucus, wrote to Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy in July of 2019 requesting a formal review of this matter. In response, Brigadier General Robert W. Bennett praised Cpl. Woodson's noteworthy actions, but failed to measurably assist in resolving this issue.

It is time for us to ensure that Cpl. Woodson's true legacy lives on by awarding him a posthumous Medal of Honor. We are asking for your active involvement in correcting this historic injustice.

Sincerely,



David Trone
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/

Pat Toomey
United States Senator

/s/

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/

Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress

/s/

Val Demings
Member of Congress

/s/

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

/s/

Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/

/s/

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s/
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

/s/
C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

/s/
John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

/s/
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/
Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress