

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2022

The Honorable Christine Wormuth
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Secretary Wormuth:

We are writing to renew our request for a formal review by an award decision authority to posthumously award the Medal of Honor to Corporal Waverly B. Woodson, Jr. and to offer our assistance in addressing any outstanding concerns the Army may have with the substance or form of materials submitted in support of this medal upgrade.

As you discussed with Senator Van Hollen on June 16, 2021 and Congressman Trone on July 29, 2021, Cpl. Woodson, an Army medic assigned to the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day. Despite having been struck by shrapnel while aboard his Landing Craft Tank and being wounded in his groin and back, Cpl. Woodson went above and beyond the call of duty by spending 30 grueling hours saving the lives of dozens, if not hundreds, of his fellow soldiers. Cpl. Woodson was a war hero who has been inadequately recognized for his actions.

Further, as discussed, while a copy of the recommendation by General John C.H. Lee that Cpl. Woodson receive the Medal of Honor has not been found, there is clear and compelling evidence that such a recommendation was made, but not honored. Through her extensive research on the Woodson case, historian and journalist Linda Hervieux uncovered a memorandum in the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library that makes specific reference to the fact that General Lee recommended Cpl. Woodson for a “Congressional medal” that “the President can give [...] personally.” The only medal to which this could refer is the Medal of Honor.

It is not without precedent for the Medal of Honor to be awarded without eyewitness affidavits or a recommendation letter when a service member was denied the Medal on the basis of race. Senator Van Hollen’s staff recently reviewed documents provided by a researcher who, in the course of developing the case file for a request involving his father, filed FOIA requests for the case files of the 22 Pacific Islander Americans who received the Medal of Honor as a result of the review mandated by Section 524 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996. Upon receipt of these files, the researcher found that of the 22 cases resulting in an upgrade to the Medal of Honor, three included zero eyewitness affidavits and one included zero eyewitness affidavits and no recommendation letter.

In an Information Paper furnished to Senator Van Hollen's office dated August 9, 2021, the Army declined to review Cpl. Woodson's Bronze Star for a potential upgrade. The Army stated that the only records received in support of the Woodson case have been from the 320th unit archives and that relevant official documents, defined as daily staff journals and after-action reports, as well as any possible surviving copy of the original award recommendation, would be maintained at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. The Army then recommended the hiring of a private researcher to search these records.

First, it is incorrect that the only documents received in support of Cpl. Woodson's case are from the unit archives. The Army has repeatedly received copies of the memorandum from the Truman Library that makes specific reference to Cpl. Woodson being recommended for the Medal of Honor, though in a conversation between Army and Congressional staff following your call with Senator Van Hollen, it was not apparent that the Army was aware of it—though the subsequent Information Paper did indicate an awareness of the memorandum. Second, the Archives which the Army suggests a private researcher be hired to search have already been extensively searched.

In a memorandum enclosed with this letter, Linda Hervieux details the extensive research she personally conducted over three years at the National Archives in College Park, aided by numerous staff archivists and the chief archivist. She also searched the National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri; the Army Archives in Carlisle, Pennsylvania; the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas; the First Division Museum in Wheaton, Illinois; and the Truman Library Archives in Independence, Missouri. To our knowledge, the Army has received all relevant records that have been uncovered from this extensive, multi-year research effort.

Further attesting to the paucity of records is the research conducted by the team of independent researchers hired by the Army in 1993 to investigate why no African Americans were awarded the Medal of Honor during World War II. These researchers, like Linda Hervieux 20 years later, looked extensively for Woodson's records and without success. We believe, based on the findings and recommendations of expert researchers, that further archival research will not supplement the historical record to the level demanded by the Army. For that reason, we respectfully request that the Army approve this medal upgrade without eyewitness affidavits or an original copy of General Lee's recommendation letter—an action that has been taken in the past, as we have shown.

Lastly, the Information Paper notes that two other medics who treated soldiers on D-Day also received the Bronze Star, and draws an equivalence between their actions and Cpl. Woodson's. While these individuals' actions were no doubt heroic and fully deserving of recognition, even the Army's own news release on the actions of Army medics on D-Day mentions the other medics only in passing, while stating that "all other participants" attested to Woodson's valor, indicating substantial firsthand evidence of what Hervieux calls Woodson's "unique heroism."

Based on extensive research on his service record and the climate within the Army regarding the award of medals for valor to Black soldiers—also detailed in the enclosed memorandum—it is clear to us that Cpl. Woodson did not receive the Medal of Honor during World War II because of the color of his skin. The Army should, at minimum, permit a formal

review, and we respectfully ask the Army to rectify this historic injustice and appropriately recognize this valorous veteran with a posthumous recommendation for the Medal of Honor.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



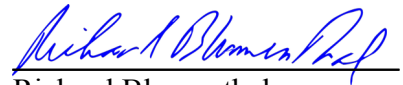
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United States Senator



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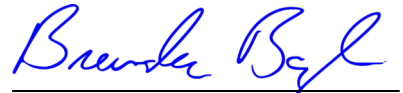
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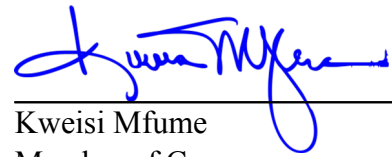
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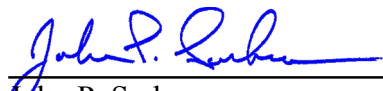
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