

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2018

Ms. Karen Durham-Aguilera
Executive Director
Army National Military Cemeteries
Arlington National Cemetery
Arlington, VA 22211

Dear Ms. Durham-Aguilera,

This month marks the fifty-fifth anniversary of the loss of the Navy submarine USS *Thresher*, which sank during deep-diving tests off the coast of Massachusetts and took the lives of 129 crew and civilian shipyard personnel on April 10, 1963. Those who perished on the *Thresher* were some of the best and brightest in the U.S. Navy and included World War II and Korean War veterans, graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy, and participants in groundbreaking undersea Arctic missions. These patriots, who voluntarily placed themselves on the front lines of the Cold War, paid the ultimate price in service to our country.

The *Thresher* catastrophe was the first loss of a nuclear-powered submarine at sea and remains the greatest loss of life aboard a submarine. These sacrifices were not made in vain. Within two months of the sinking of *Thresher*, the Navy instituted the submarine safety program known as SUBSAFE. Whereas between 1915 and 1963, the Navy lost sixteen submarines for reasons unrelated to combat, since the creation of this rigorous program, not one SUBSAFE-certified submarine has been lost.

That means that for over fifty years, the rigorous standards and certifications implemented by the Navy in the wake of the *Thresher* tragedy have kept American submarines and their crews safe. The ripples of the SUBSAFE program even extend beyond the U.S. Navy. Following the loss of the Space Shuttle Columbia, NASA described SUBSAFE as "successful safety programs and practices that could be models for NASA." The story of *Thresher* is thus not one of loss, but one of security, perseverance, and safety for two generations of U.S. Navy submariners who followed in the footsteps of the crew of *Thresher*.

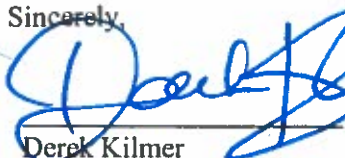
We believe it's time to recognize the sacrifice of the *Thresher* and advancements made within the U.S. Navy submarine fleet as a direct result from the lives lost. We believe it's time to honor the *Thresher* crew and shipyard personnel lost in 1963 with a memorial worthy of their legacy. We believe it's time to honor the memory of those lost and the price they paid for future generations of sailors and for the safety and security of our country with a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery.


We understand that the USS *Thresher* Arlington National Cemetery Memorial Project has submitted an application package for a modest memorial stone along a walkway at the cemetery. We wholeheartedly support this application and request that you favorably consider granting approval for such a memorial.

Based on our understanding of the memorial approval process at Arlington Cemetery, the casualty count of an event for which a memorial is being proposed is taken into account. In the historical narrative of American sacrifice for freedom and peace, the 129 lives lost on *Thresher* seems modest. In addition to those lives lost, we ask you to also consider the lives saved as a result of the catastrophe when deliberating on the memorial application. That is the true legacy of *Thresher*.

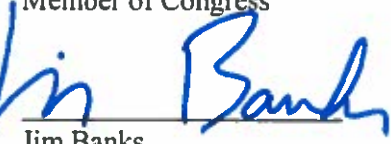
We appreciate your consideration of this request.

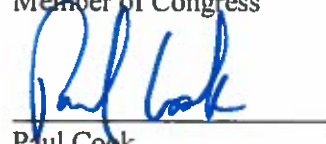
Sincerely,


Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

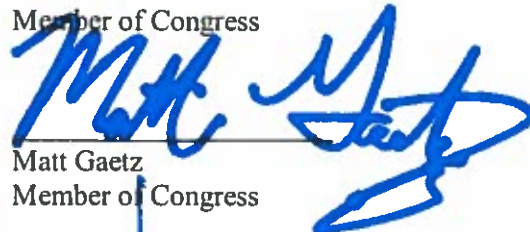

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress

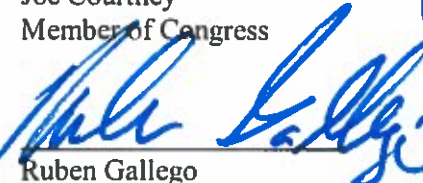

Scott Taylor
Member of Congress



Jim Banks
Member of Congress


Paul Cook
Member of Congress


Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

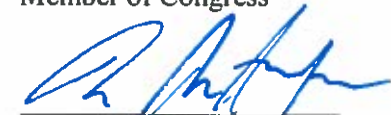

Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress


Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Colleen Hanabusa
Member of Congress


Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress


Rick Larsen
Member of Congress


Thomas MacArthur
Member of Congress


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress


Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress


Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress