

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 9, 2018

The Honorable Mark Esper
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

CC: The Honorable Richard Spencer
Secretary of the Navy

Dear Secretary Esper:

April 10th marked the 55th anniversary of the tragic sinking of the *USS Thresher*. We urge you to authorize the building of a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery in recognition of the service and sacrifice of her crew and all U.S. submariners lost in the line of duty.

As you know, on April 9, 1963, the *USS Thresher*, built and maintained at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, departed with a crew of 16 officers, 96 sailors, and 17 civilians. Early in the morning on April 10th, approximately 300 miles off the coast of New England, the *Thresher* experienced an incident during a post-maintenance sea trial dive from which she could not recover. Tragically, the boat was lost along with all 129 men on board.

During the 55th anniversary of the *Thresher* incident, we remember with profound sorrow the loss of her gallant crew and seek to honor their memory. We also pay tribute to the important changes that were made in submarine safety as a result of this sad and disastrous event. In response to the *Thresher* tragedy, the U.S. Navy instituted a new program to ensure the health and safety of our nation's submarines. The establishment of the Submarine Safety and Quality Assurance Program (SUBSAFE) – now one of the world's most comprehensive military safety programs – has helped provide maximum protection for our Navy crews, and since that time, no SUBSAFE-certified submarine has been lost. SUBSAFE is a legacy owed to those service members lost as a result of the *Thresher* tragedy, and has undoubtedly saved the lives of submariners who have served since.

As we pass the 55th anniversary since we lost the *Thresher*, we believe a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery would be a fitting tribute to its legacy. As you know, a number of special monuments and memorials have been dedicated at Arlington, including tributes to the *USS Serpens*, the *USS Maine*, the Space Shuttles *Columbia* and *Challenger* as well as those lost during the Iran rescue mission in 1980. We believe a memorial to the *USS Thresher* would reflect the Arlington National Cemetery's long legacy as a national shrine and a "living history of freedom...where dignity and honor rest in solemn repose." This memorial would serve not only to honor the sacrifice of those that lost their lives but as a reminder of the dangers that all submariners face when they volunteer for duty.

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We hope you will strongly consider the request from the USS *Thresher* Arlington National Cemetery Memorial Project, and we look forward to working with you to make this memorial a reality. Thank you for your consideration and your distinguished service to our nation.

Sincerely,



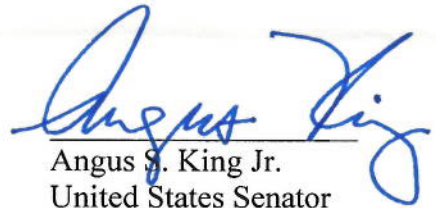
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



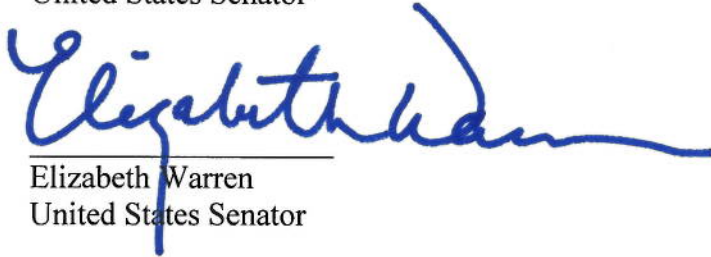
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King Jr.
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator