



CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS  
117<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS

January 29, 2021

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The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin  
Secretary of Defense  
Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

Thank you for working to remove names that honor Confederate leaders from U.S. military bases, installations, and other assets. We urge you to ensure that the base names that replace Confederate names reflect America’s diversity, and include robust representation of Latino military heroes.

First, we must acknowledge the harm caused to African Americans and other people of color when military bases, installations, and other federally owned property honors Confederate leaders who rose in rebellion against the United States. The Confederacy was a shameful reminder of the danger that racism poses to our democracy. We are pleased that Congress has acted to begin the process to rid Confederate leader names from the Department of Defense (DoD) by mandating the creation of a commission to review names and other monuments that honor the Confederacy on DOD property. Ensuring this commission is committed to its mission is of the utmost importance.

Considering Congress’ clear intention, we urge you to remove all four commissioners appointed by then-Acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller. These commissioners were appointed in the midst of a presidential transition by non-Senate confirmed Acting Secretary of Defense who himself was installed by a President who vetoed the NDAA in part due to opposition to renaming bases named after traitors and who incited his followers to stage an insurrection at the Capitol. The image of the Confederate battle flag within the U.S. Capitol building is not one which can be forgotten or ever allowed again.

Given the context of this attack on our democracy, the work of removing Confederate names from the Department of Defense cannot be trusted to appointees of a President who gave aid and comfort to the ideological heirs of the Confederacy. We therefore urge you to remove these commissioners who will

undermine the legitimacy of the renaming commission at best and sabotage the process from within at worst. In their place, we ask you to appoint a diverse slate of new commissioners, including at least one Latino, out of respect for Latino Americans' rich history of U.S. military service. Latino perspectives must be a part of the effort to roll back the racism and bigotry that has so harmed our nation.

From Glorieta Pass to Khe Sahn to Normandy to Fallujah, Latino Americans have time and again proven their fighting skills, their courage, and their patriotism in defense of the Union. We urge the Department of Defense to seize this opportunity to recognize and celebrate the contributions and sacrifice of generations of Latino Americans and other people of color who have served the United States with distinction in uniform.

We look forward to partnering with you on this effort and stand ready to assist in ensuring that Latinos are represented on this important commission.

Sincerely,



Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress



Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Nanette Diaz Barragan  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Adriano Espaillat  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus



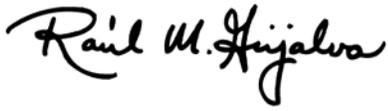
Darren Soto  
Whip, Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress



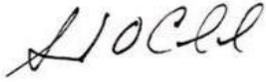
Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress



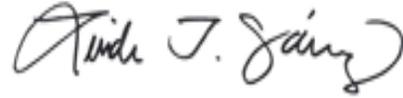
Raul Grijalva  
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



Salud O. Carbajal  
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress



Albio Sires  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres  
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Grace F. Napolitano  
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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress