

Supports renaming certain military bases

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Reed, and Ranking Member Thornberry:

We write to request that the conference report of the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) *National Defense Authorization Act*
(NDAA) include a provision to require the Department of Defense (DoD, or the Department) rename all property and other assets owned by the Department named in honor of Confederate officers.

As you know, both the Senate and House versions of the FY21 NDAA contain provisions requiring the Secretary of Defense to rename all military property, including the ten Army installations, named in honor of Confederate officers. Section 2829 of the House bill requires the renaming process to be complete within one year, while Section 377 of the Senate bill authorizes a three-year period for completing renaming. Both provisions mandate that the Secretary establish a formal process for cataloging all assets to be renamed and for determining new names.

The Senate and House strongly supported the inclusion of this requirement by passing their bills with overwhelming, veto-proof, bipartisan majorities. The requirement also received bipartisan support in committee markups. Despite the widespread support for this proposal, Chairman Inhofe has declared his intention to strip it out behind closed doors in conference, saying “We’re going to see to it that provision doesn’t survive the bill… I’m not going to say how at this point.”

We strongly oppose removing this provision and respectfully request the conferees to retain in the conference report the provision endorsed by both chambers: a requirement for the Department to rename all military assets named for the Confederacy no later than three years after the date of enactment.

Millions of service members of color have lived on, trained at, and deployed from installations named to honor traitors that killed Americans in defense of chattel slavery. Renaming these bases does not disrespect our military – it honors the sacrifices and contributions of our service members in a way that better reflects our nation's diversity and values. We know who these bases were named for and why they were named. It is long past the time to correct this longstanding, historic injustice. We must not shrink from our solemn duty in this moment.

Signed by Senator Tom Udall, D-N.M. and 37 U.S. senators

By Tom Udall
Senator, D-N.M.