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Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Housing and Real Property

Local Government and
Bi-County Agencies

Natural Resources,
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 1st, 2023

Testimony in Favor of HB0605
Commission to Establish a Memorial to the Global War on Terror

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. For the record, my name is Delegate Nick Allen and I am here to testify in support of **HB0605**, which will create a commission to build a memorial to Veterans of the Global War on Terror and their families.

I am incredibly proud to sponsor this bill because I am a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, an Army Veteran, a Veteran of Afghanistan, and I have deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, and Operation Inherent Resolve. Further, on my deployments and during my time in uniform, I served alongside many truly great Americans, including some who returned home wounded and others who did not return at all.

The Global War on Terror began on October 7, 2001, when President Bush ordered the first military action against the Taliban in response to the September 11th attacks. The war ended 7,267 days later—almost 20 years-- with the withdrawal from Afghanistan at the end of August 2021. It is America's longest war, by far.

During those two decades, under four different presidents, four different generations of Americans—baby boomers, gen X, millennials, and gen Z-- served in uniform, and 7,052 American service members gave their lives in combat zones in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and other locations¹.

The 2020 Census reported over 3.7 million post-9/11 veterans in the United States. Of those, 43% are reported to have a service-connected disability². That comes to almost 1.6 million Global War on Terror-era disabled veterans across the county. For these veterans, and for their families, the war has never truly ended.

Maryland, despite being geographically small, has historically played and continues to play an outsized role in our national defense. Maryland is home to 20 different military installations as well as 34,920 active-duty service members, 14,851 active-duty spouses, and 29,131 active-duty children. Additionally,

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https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War_Direct%20War%20Deaths_9.1.21.pdf

² <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/acs-43.pdf>

Maryland is home to 25,948 National Guard and reserve members, 11,147 National Guard and reserve spouses, and 17,411 National Guard and reserve children³.

I take the time to highlight these numbers because, I feel, the sacrifices made by military families are often overlooked, but the reality is rather incredible. By 2010, not even halfway through the war, 43% of active military had deployed multiple times. Additionally, 60% of those who deployed were married and 50% had dependent children.⁴ At the height of the war, most American active-duty units were deploying for 9, 12, or 18 months, with 2 years of time at home in between deployments. This means, roughly, over the course of 12 years in the military, a family would be without their spouse and/or parent for a total of 4 years.

I don't believe I need to convince anyone on this committee as to why these veterans and their families are worthy of a memorial. But I want to be clear as to why we need to begin this work *now*:

World War II began, for the United States, on December 7, 1941 and ended on September 2, 1945. The Maryland General Assembly established a commission to create the World War II memorial in 1991—50 years after the war began and 46 years after it ended. Ground was broken on that beautiful memorial in 1997, 56 years after the war began and 52 years after it ended. The memorial was dedicated at the end of 2008, 67 years after the war began and 63 years after it ended⁵. Many veterans of that war did not live to see their memorial.

Almost 22 years have passed since 9/11. After two full decades of sustained conflict, I do not believe American Veterans of the Global War on Terror should wait another 30 or 40 years to be honored. This bill gives us a chance to honor them NOW.

Thank you, colleagues, for your time. I respectfully request a favorable report on **HB0605** and am looking forward to answering any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Nick Allen
Delegate, District 8

³ <https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/state/MD>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK206861/>

⁵ <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/26excom/defunct/html/37worl.html>