



MILITARY BOWL

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March 4, 2025

Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
Chair Brian J. Feldman
Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy and Environment, Committee,

Hello, my name is Steve Beck and I am the President and Executive Director of the Military Bowl Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. I am writing today in support of SB781 to establish a task force to study issues for a state park dedicated to veterans' care.

The Military Bowl Foundation was founded in 2008 as the DC Bowl Committee, originally created to organize an annual college football game. In 2010, that bowl game became known as the Military Bowl, dedicated to honoring and supporting the nation's service members.

A few years later, the name of the organization was changed to its present name, to more accurately reflect what our organization does. Now, in 2025, the Military Bowl Foundation is about much more than our annual bowl game, which takes place each December, since 2013, at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium in Annapolis.

In 2016, the Foundation purchased a 294-acre property near Cambridge, Maryland, and established Patriot Point, a retreat center for wounded, ill and injured service members, their families and caregivers to enjoy outdoor recreational activities in a safe environment.

I am not exaggerating when I say that Patriot Point is one of the most important places in our great state – and beyond. We overhauled the property, improving accessibility for guests with special needs and enhancing activities on site. We furthered existing partnerships and built new relationships with veteran and military service organizations to increase our reach. Add it all up and we have a truly special place, one that has a direct connection to our philanthropy.

Roughly 500 guests visit Patriot Point annually. Some fish. Others hunt. Some work out in the Under Armour Freedom Fitness Center. Some do yoga. Some sit on the beach and relax. Some feed chickens or tend to plants in the greenhouse. They might take out a kayak or a stand-up paddleboard – Patriot Point has 2.3 miles of shoreline. Some go out on a boat for a ride or to cast a line and fish. Others partake in skeet shooting.

Military Bowl Foundation, Inc.

📍 1742 N Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20036 @ info@militarybowl.org



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Guests might stay for just a day, overnight, a weekend or even a week. Regardless how long the duration of their stay, the feedback is nearly universal: "When can I come back?"

At Patriot Point, we say that "Healing begins at the gate," and that certainly is true. Along the winding, gravel driveway from the road to the property, you can sense guests – many of whom have endured extreme trauma – dropping their guard, taking a breath and exhaling.

It is incredibly motivating to see the impact that Patriot Point makes and so rewarding to know the positive difference we are making.

Consider what one retired U.S. Army Green Beret told us after visiting Patriot Point: "Patriot Point allowed me to enjoy the camaraderie of veterans and people who support veterans. It is not only physically relaxing but mentally encouraging. To be at Patriot Point, you get to take a deep breath and relax for a while. It is very rewarding. Patriot Point is a welcoming atmosphere for all veterans. I hope many more people can get a chance to visit and benefit from this amazing place."

But no matter how hard we try to reach as many service members as possible, we know that we are only scratching the surface. Our nation's active-duty and veteran service members need us. These brave defenders of freedom need to know that someone cares about their well-being. That there are people who genuinely want to help them overcome the adversity they face as a result of serving our country. There is no shortage of people who need a stay at a place like Patriot Point to help ease their mind and help them focus on their own personal healing journeys.

The establishment of a state park in Western Maryland that will be dedicated to veterans' care would be an amazing resource for so many Maryland residents. According to the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families, nearly 360,000 veterans reside in our state, with another 100,000 on active-duty or serving in the reserves or National Guard. These men and women need to know that we want to help them.

The Military Bowl Foundation is here to help the state in any way we can, whether that is helping to establish partnerships, recommending or helping run programs and/or assisting in fundraising activities or more. Just let us know. This is what we do and we would be happy to share our knowledge and experience.

Sincerely,

Steve Beck
President & Executive Director
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