

Congressman Roger Marshall, MD  
House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Natural Parks,  
Forest, and Public Lands  
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I'd like to begin by thanking the members of the Natural Resources Committee for taking the time to consider the First Infantry Recognition of Sacrifice in Theater Act (FIRST Act). And a special thanks to Lieutenant General Thomas Rhame for his advice and assistance while crafting this legislation. His 34 years of service to our country and the First Infantry Division are invaluable and he continues to serve them today.

The First Infantry Division, also known as The Big Red One, has called Fort Riley home since 1955, and brought with it, a heroic and storied past. Established in 1917, the Division celebrated their 101<sup>st</sup> anniversary last year. They have fought in World War I, World War II, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the Balkans peacekeeping missions, the War on Terror and as of today, multiple operations around the globe.

In fact, after firing the first American shots of World War I, the First Infantry Division provided the United States its first victory in the "War to Win all Wars" at the Battle of Cantigny, France. Despite suffering more than 1,000 casualties, the First Division captured the village from German forces, defended it against repeated counterattacks, and bolstered the morale of

the Allies. The Division returned home in September 1919, with 5 Medals of Honor.

In World War II, the First Division fought in the allied invasion of North Africa, leading to the defeat of the Axis Afrika Korps and capturing over 250,000 soldiers. The Division then departed for the invasion of Sicily, after a specific request from Lieutenant General George S. Patton. There they faced fierce mountain combat and suffered heavy casualties, with some units losing over half their fighting strength. The First Division would then return to England in preparation for the invasion of Normandy. On D-Day, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944, soldiers from The Big Red One would once again lead the assault on German forces in the landings at Omaha Beach. They would then go on to fight a continuous offensive across France and into Germany, suffering over 20,000 casualties throughout the war. After the war the First Infantry division would provide protection for occupied Germany and security at the Nuremberg War Trials. These soldiers played a pivotal role in World War II and would return home with sixteen members being awarded the Medal of Honor.

The First Infantry Division has been active all over the world, assisting in combat and noncombat missions for over one hundred years. Today, soldiers from the Division stand at the ready in over 15 countries. We can sleep peacefully here at home, because they stand at the ready abroad. Since the Division's establishment, more than 13,000 soldiers of the First Infantry Division have lost their lives in battle. It is our duty as

Members of Congress to ensure these fallen soldiers are not forgotten.

The FIRST Act allows the inclusion of names of over 600 fallen soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice in Operation Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn, Operation Enduring Freedom and future U.S. operations. I'm proud to stand beside them as they continue to exemplify their motto "No Mission Too Difficult. No Sacrifice Too Great. Duty First!"