

Written Testimony
The Honorable Jill N. Tokuda, Member of Congress (HI-02)

Member Day
House Committee on Veterans Affairs'
December 4, 2025

Chairman Bost, Ranking Member Takano, thank you for hosting this Member Day hearing in the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. About 89,000 veterans live in Hawai‘i. I am grateful for their contribution to America’s defense, and I am working to ensure we keep our end of the bargain to help our veterans succeed in post-military life and get the care they need for service-related conditions.

I would like to share with you two legislative initiatives I am pursuing in the Veterans Affairs Committee’s jurisdiction.

The first is the Parity for Native Hawaiian Veterans Act, which I re-introduced this year with my colleague, Senator Hirono. The bill would allow Native Hawaiian veterans to receive care from Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems by requiring the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reimburse these systems for services provided. VA already pays for care at Indian Health Service, Tribal Health Programs, and Urban Indian Organization facilities, but not at Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems. My bill would correct this disparity and ensure Native Hawaiian veterans receive the same benefits as their American Indian and Alaska Native counterparts.

The second bill addresses a deeply disturbing case involving Dr. Robert McCormick Browne, a veteran buried in the National Cemetery of the Pacific. He has been credibly accused of sexually abusing dozens of students over decades in Hawai‘i while practicing as a psychiatrist. Dr. Browne died by suicide shortly after these allegations became public, escaping criminal accountability. It is appalling that he remains interred in a VA cemetery. I led the Hawai‘i delegation in sending a letter to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs about this issue, but VA confirmed they lack authority to review his case for disinterment because current law applies only to interments on or after December 20, 2013; Dr. Browne was interred in 1991.

I offered an NDAA amendment this year to disinter Dr. Browne from Punchbowl Cemetery, but the Rules Committee did not make it in order. I respectfully ask for this committee’s help in advancing legislation in the coming year to, at minimum, disinter Dr. Browne from the National Cemetery of the Pacific and to revisit the 2013 cutoff that prevents VA from addressing cases like this. Nothing can undo the harm he caused, but one small measure of justice would be to ensure that survivors and their families no longer risk seeing his headstone at Punchbowl.

Thank you for listening to my concerns this morning and thank you for your persistent efforts to improve the lives of America’s veterans.