

**TESTIMONY OF DANIEL LINDEN, HEAD OF OPERATIONS - SHIRION
COLLECTIVE - IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 2701, THE “*FALLEN SERVICEMEMBERS
RELIGIOUS HERITAGE RESTORATION ACT*” BEFORE THE DISABILITY
ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE
VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

JUNE 24, 2025

Chairman Luttrell, Ranking Member McGarvey and Honorable Members of the Subcommittee, there are moments in the life of a nation when the call is not to innovate, legislate, or rebuild. Instead, it is a call to remember, to restore, and to repair. The legislation before you, H.R. 2701, represents exactly that kind of moment.

I submit this testimony on behalf of the Shirion Collective, an organization dedicated to historical integrity and the preservation of collective memory. I write also for every American family whose loved one lies in rest beneath a marker that does not reflect who they were. I speak in strong and solemn support of H.R. 2701, the *Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Act*, a bill that embodies both quiet justice and deep national conscience.

More than seventy-five years after the end of the Second World War, hundreds of Jewish-American servicemen remain buried in American military cemeteries under Latin crosses, rather than Stars of David. These men served with honor, fell in combat, and were buried far from home. But through no fault of their own, their final resting places conceal rather than reflect their religious identities.

Some of these errors occurred because records were incomplete or next of kin were not available. Others resulted from deliberate decisions by Jewish soldiers who removed indicators of faith in order to avoid Nazi targeting if captured. In all cases, the result was the same. The symbol under which they rest does not match the truth of who they were in life.

This is not a small discrepancy. It is a wound in the historical record and a quiet disservice to men who gave their lives in service to this country.

Today, the organization known as Operation Benjamin is working to make these stories whole again. Through meticulous archival research, family interviews, genealogical tracing, and cooperation with the American Battle Monuments Commission, they are identifying these soldiers and correcting their grave markers. Their work is careful, respectful, and historically sound. Each new Star of David placed at a gravesite is not simply a symbol of religious identity. It is a restoration of truth.

To date, more than two dozen such corrections have taken place. These ceremonies—whether in Normandy, Sicily, Florence, or Manila—are deeply moving expressions of care and national responsibility. Yet the scale of the task is vast. Estimates suggest that between 600 and 1,000 Jewish-American servicemen may still lie beneath the wrong marker. Private funding alone is not sufficient to complete this sacred work.

The bill under consideration would provide critical federal support to organizations like Operation Benjamin. It would allow for formal partnerships and sustained funding to continue identifying, documenting, and correcting these burial records with the dignity they deserve.

This is not only a Jewish issue. It is an American issue. It is about whether our country believes in accuracy, in memory, and in doing what is right, even long after the fact. It asks whether we, as a nation, are prepared to match truth with remembrance and identity with stone.

The Shirion Collective fully endorses this legislation. We believe it reflects the best of American values: fidelity to the past, reverence for sacrifice, and a willingness to correct what history has left incomplete.

In Jewish tradition, there is a prayer called El Maleh Rachamim. It asks that the souls of the departed be remembered in peace and be bound up in the bond of eternal life. This bill is a national expression of that prayer. It binds memory to truth, service to identity, and honor to accuracy. It tells the families of these soldiers that we see them. That we remember. That we care.

On behalf of our organization, and in the name of every fallen soldier whose story deserves to be told in full, I urge you to support and pass the *Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Act*. Let the record show that when we were given the chance to do what was right, we answered with conviction and with care.

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