

**TESTIMONY OF SHABBOS KESTENBAUM 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 and Ranking Member McGarvey, as a Jewish activist, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, and someone deeply engaged in the fight against antisemitism—particularly in academic spaces—I am proud to voice my support for H.R. 2701, the Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Act.

This bill seeks to correct an institutional oversight that has gone unaddressed for far too long: the mistaken burial of Jewish American servicemen under Latin crosses in overseas U.S. military cemeteries, rather than the Star of David that reflects their faith and identity. These errors, while often unintentional, constitute a form of erasure—an erasure we cannot afford to ignore, especially in a time of resurgent antisemitism.

The work of private non-profit organizations like Operation Benjamin to restore these headstones is sacred, honorable, and historically essential. These men were Jews and Americans—two identities that are too often treated as incompatible, especially in today’s hostile academic and social climates. In truth, these servicemen gave their lives not in spite of their Jewishness, but as proud Jews fighting for American ideals. Their legacy must reflect that truth.

H.R. 2701 empowers our government to ensure that these soldiers are remembered as they lived.

It's not just about correcting a headstone—it's about affirming that Jewish identity has always been a part of the American story.

As someone who has challenged institutions that failed to protect Jewish students and Jewish dignity, I believe this bill offers a clear opportunity for Congress to stand up for historical justice and communal memory. I urge its swift passage.

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Shabbos Kestenbaum  
Jewish Activist and Harvard Divinity School Graduate  
Lead Plaintiff, Anti-Discrimination Lawsuit Against Harvard University