

**TESTIMONY OF BETHANY MANDEL 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 I am honored to submit this written testimony in strong support of H.R. 2701, the Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Act.

Over the past year, I’ve had the privilege of participating in three military headstone rededication ceremonies in three different countries, organized by Operation Benjamin. This remarkable organization works to identify and rectify cases in which Jewish American service members were mistakenly buried under Latin crosses instead of the Star of David, despite having lived, served and died as Jews.

Through these moving ceremonies, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that proper recognition has on the families of the fallen, the Jewish community, and the broader American public. These are not just symbolic acts—they are acts of historical justice, restoring both individual dignity and communal memory. Hearing the stories of these brave servicemen and seeing them acknowledged by U.S. officials, local dignitaries, and media has been a powerful reminder of the deep Jewish roots within our nation’s military history.

At a time of rising antisemitism, the importance of telling these stories and honoring Jewish American service members correctly cannot be overstated. Their service is a testament to the diversity and strength of the American armed forces. H.R. 2701 is not just about correcting old mistakes—it's about affirming the place of Jewish Americans in the fabric of this nation's history, and standing against erasure in any form.

I urge Congress to pass the Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Act without delay. It is a long-overdue act of respect, historical accuracy, and national integrity.

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