

Personal Statement of Nicole Neily in Support of H.R. 2701, the *Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Act*

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As the founder and president of Defending Education, I work every day to ensure that students are educated—not indoctrinated—and that families have a voice in what their children learn and how they are treated. In recent years, we’ve seen a troubling rise in efforts to politicize education and divide students along lines of identity—including the normalization of antisemitism in the K-12 space.

That’s why I’m proud to support H.R. 2701, the Fallen Servicemembers Religious Heritage Restoration Act. This legislation addresses a long-standing wrong: the mistaken burial of Jewish American soldiers under Latin crosses in overseas U.S. military cemeteries. These men died for a country they loved, and their identity as Jews deserves to be recognized and honored.

Organizations like Operation Benjamin that are working to research these soldiers have shown how powerful it is to restore these headstones—not only for the families, but for the nation. Restoring the Star of David to these graves is more than a correction; it is an affirmation that Jewish Americans are an integral part of our shared history and national story.

At a time when antisemitism is growing—not only online or on college campuses but increasingly in our elementary and high schools—this bill sends a powerful message: Jewish identity matters. Jewish service matters. And Jewish lives must be remembered fully and truthfully.

Unfortunately, I am personally familiar with the importance of a soldier’s grave marker reflecting his religious beliefs; my younger brother was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in 2018, and we felt privileged to be able to choose the symbol that best reflected David’s faith. The soldiers, sailors, and airmen who made the ultimate

sacrifice on behalf of our country deserve the same - and as a grateful nation, this is the least we can do to thank them.

We must model for our children what it looks like to stand up for truth, dignity, and historical justice. I urge Congress to pass H.R. 2701 and ensure that these fallen Jewish heroes are remembered as they truly were.

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Nicole Neily
President and Founder, Defending Education
Arlington VA
Nicole.k.neily@gmail.com