



**Testimony Before the
House Armed Services Committee,
Military Personnel Subcommittee**

by

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Chairman Coffman, Ranking Member Speier, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Air Force Association's leadership and our 96,000 members, the nearly 700,000 Airmen, civilians, and families that we represent, and the millions of veterans who have worn Air Force Blue, I am honored to testify today on the importance of Arlington National Cemetery.

We have been involved in this issue for quite some time and routinely participate in meetings with the Arlington National Cemetery's Advisory Committee for the Secretary of the Army.

There are an estimated 22 million veterans alive today who served honorably and understand the significance of Arlington National Cemetery. As the organization that led the financing and construction of the Air Force Memorial, which could potentially be encroached by cemetery expansion options, we at AFA realize that the surrounding land is finite. Space in this hallowed ground is projected to run out in the early 2040s, and a solution must be found soon.

Thank you for holding this hearing and for having this difficult discussion.

We strongly believe that our nation's decision makers should explore an 'all of the above' strategy, to include land expansion and land optimization before reducing or curtailing eligibility. It is important to keep the cemetery viable as long as possible for future Medal of Honor recipients, those killed in combat, and top medal awardees.

We should strive to obtain surrounding land to expand the present cemetery. Although the cemetery's majestic serenity should be largely preserved, there are avenues to increase burial locations without losing the cemetery's solemn presence. In addition to exploring expansion possibilities, more above ground inurnments should be considered.

As military members age and consider their final resting place, it is paramount that this hearing today be followed by quick and decisive action from the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of Defense, and the President. We ask for your oversight in making sure this happens.

Thank you for the invitation to testify today. We thank you for bringing this issue before the public, and the Air Force Association is honored and

privileged to present testimony to advocate for the continued viability of Arlington National Cemetery. We are entrusted with the solemn responsibility to care for those men and women that sacrificed so much for our great nation, and we are eager to work with the US Congress and the Department of Defense on the best way forward for Arlington National Cemetery.

I look forward to your questions.