

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 12, 2016

Mr. Patrick Murphy
Acting Secretary of the United States Army
The United States Army
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Murphy:

We write to request your personal review of the case to award James Megellas, a 98-year-old World War II Veteran, the Medal of Honor for acts of valor demonstrated as a first lieutenant in the 82nd Airborne Division during the Battle of the Bulge. We believe additional review is warranted based on errors in Army records and injustice in refusing to upgrade his Silver Star to the Medal of Honor.

On January 28, 1945, Megellas led his 27-man platoon in a surprise, devastating attack on a much larger advancing enemy force. The attack killed over 100 enemy troops; and 180 Nazi SS troops were captured. The victorious attack resulted in the seizure of Herresbach, Belgium, the last town before the Siegfried line – without the loss of a single American life.

Megellas' noteworthy Silver Star citation unfortunately omitted the most significant individual act of valor by 1st Lt. Megellas that night – he singlehandedly destroyed an attacking German Mark V Panzer Tank and its crew, acting alone on foot and armed only with his Thompson submachine gun and two gammon grenades. Furthermore, he alone killed 17 enemy soldiers in the initial firefight, before arriving in the town and killing 8 more. Finally, his surname is misspelled as "Megallas," whereas his previously awarded Distinguished Service Cross spelled his name correctly.

Col. Edward J. Sims, 1st Lt. Megellas' superior officer who recommended Megellas for the Medal of Honor 71 years ago, discovered the citation's mistakes at a 504th platoon reunion in 1999. He immediately set about correcting the record, by preparing sworn eyewitness statements, contacting members of Congress, and requesting the Army's reconsideration of Megellas for the Medal of Honor.

The Army declined the upgrade in 2003, without having interviewed Megellas, Sims, or the eyewitnesses whose sworn statements had been prepared. The Army stated that because Sims' original paperwork could not be reviewed, having been destroyed in the 1973 Army records fire, that the board could not make the determination that the proper award had not already been given. Further, the Army stated that although Megellas did take out the German tank, that fact

alone would not have changed the decision. The Army rendered this decision without consulting its own battle records, which indicate that a tank was in fact destroyed at Herresbach.

We note that according to the Army, during 1944, the Army granted the Distinguished Service Cross to soldiers who destroyed tanks with a bazooka, and to some who took out machine gun nests. Megellas has been called the equivalent of five Sherman tanks, for himself charging the German Mark V Panzer tank on foot, armed only with his Thompson submachine gun and two gammon grenades.

Col. Sims continued his efforts to see Megellas awarded the Medal of Honor until his passing in 2013, and the Army has declined subsequent requests for review by members of Congress.

Bipartisan Congressional support for Megellas continues to strengthen, with legislation in both chambers that would authorize the award of the Congressional Medal of Honor to James Megellas, sponsored by Sens. Baldwin, Cornyn and Johnson, and Rep. Grothman, should the Army grant this request.

The American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) strongly contends that Megellas deserves the Medal of Honor. Despite significant representation in the Armed Forces, only one Greek American received the Medal of Honor for service in World War II, Chris Carr, birth name Christos Karaberis.

At this juncture, only your intervention as Acting Secretary of the Army can rectify this injustice against James Megellas, Edward Sims, and the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne. The American people deserve to honor this hero, who will celebrate his 99th birthday on March 11, while he is still living.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of James Megellas' case for the Medal of Honor.

Sincerely,



GUS M. BILIRAKIS
Co-Chair, Congressional
Caucus on Hellenic Issues



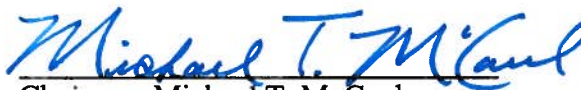
CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Co-Chair, Congressional
Caucus on Hellenic Issues




PETE SESSIONS
Chairman, House
Committee on Rules



Speaker Paul D. Ryan
Member of Congress



Chairman Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress



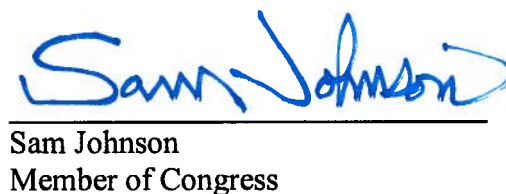
Chairman Jeff Miller
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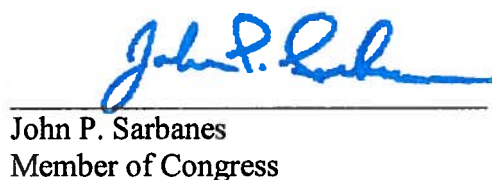
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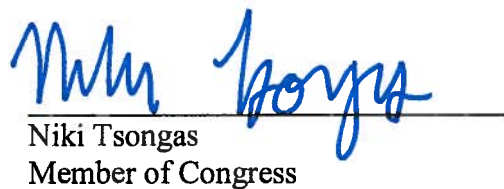
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Member of Congress



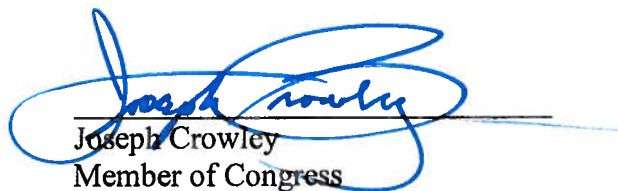
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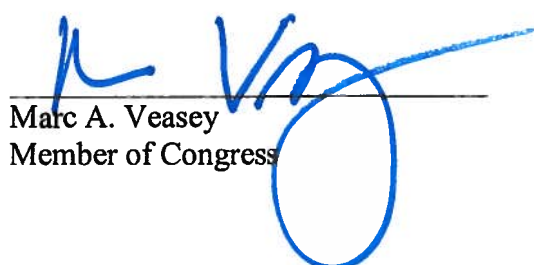
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