



February 25, 2016

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
United States Senate
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Joni Ernst
United States Senate
111 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski and Senator Ernst:

I am writing today to express the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association's (AOPA) strong support for your bipartisan legislation, the Women Airforce Service Pilot Arlington Inurnment Restoration Act (S. 2437). AOPA is the largest, most influential general aviation association in the world.

As you know, the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) is the civilian unit the U.S. government started in 1939 to train women to fly, and free up male pilots for combat during World War II. These women paid their own way to go into training and every single trainee had to already have a pilot's license to enter the WASP program.

On the home front, WASPs flew 60 million miles from 120 bases, testing aircraft fresh off the assembly line, transporting cargo, and towing gunnery targets. Of 25,000 women who applied, 1,900 were accepted, 1,078 received their civilian licenses, and 38 died during their service.

The WASP program ran from 1942 to 1944 however, WASPs were never awarded full military status until Congress passed a law thirty years later in 1977 that retroactively granted WASP pilots active duty status for the purposes of all laws by the Veterans' Administration. In 2002, the U.S. Army which runs Arlington National Cemetery approved active duty designees including WASP pilots for military honors and inurnments at Arlington National Cemetery but the Secretary of the Army reversed this decision in 2015.



AOPA fully supports S. 2437 and urges the Senate to pass this important legislation. These pioneers who serve as role models for today's female pilots dedicated their service to our country during World War II and should be allowed inurnment at Arlington National Cemetery just as they are at other national cemeteries throughout the country.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Baker
President

cc: Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader
Honorable Harry Reid, Minority Leader
Honorable Johnny Isakson, Chairman, Veterans Affairs Committee
Honorable Richard Blumenthal, Ranking Member, Veterans Affairs Committee