

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 5, 2013

The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

We are writing to commend you for granting a waiver to Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) Linda Campbell, so that her spouse, Ms. Nancy Lynchild, can be laid to rest alongside her in Willamette National Cemetery. We strongly believe in equality under the law for all Americans, particularly for our veterans, who continually put themselves in harm's way for our country. It is unacceptable that, after selflessly serving their nation, these men and women who have given so much would not be allowed to be buried next to the person they love in our national cemeteries.

We expect that you will continue to grant similar waivers moving forward. Making this important change is a matter of basic fairness and equity. We have applauded the President for his decision not to defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in federal court, and we welcomed the Department of Defense's recent announcement that they will extend additional benefits to LGBT service members and their families. We also commend you, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, for working to ensure that the Department is a welcoming place for LGBT veterans and their families, and for your continued commitment to achieving equity and fairness for all of our nation's veterans.

Although the Obama Administration has taken important steps towards achieving equality for LGBT Americans and their families, such as recognizing the validity and dignity of committed same sex couples and working to end discrimination in federal benefits on the basis of sexual orientation, there is still much more work to be done. Numerous federal benefits remain restricted by DOMA, including specific benefits that could soften the tragic blow of the loss of a loved one.

While we work to repeal DOMA in Congress, it is our hope that the Department of Veterans Affairs will continue to examine its policies and implement changes that further advance equality for all Americans. We ask that such changes include implementing an expedited waiver process, so that a veteran mourning the loss of her same-sex spouse need not also worry whether her spouse can be buried alongside her in a national cemetery. Offering burial rights in national cemeteries to same sex spouses of our nation's veterans is not only a matter of fairness and equity, it is simply the right thing to do.

Thank you for granting spousal burial benefits to Lt Col Campbell, and for your continued commitment to our nation's veterans. We look forward to your response on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Patty Murray

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