

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 9, 2019

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Reed and Ranking Member Thornberry:

As you begin conference discussions on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for (FY) Fiscal Year 2020, we respectfully ask that you include section 1094 of H.R. 2500. This section is identical to the S. 849, the U.S.S. Frank E. Evans Act. This bipartisan bill would add the names of 74 sailors (the "Lost 74") to the Vietnam Memorial wall who were killed off the coast of Vietnam in a training accident, but they were outside the conflict zone. While hundreds of names have been added since it was built, the memorial still does not include the "Lost 74".

After serving multiple tours off the coast of Vietnam, the USS Frank E. Evans was sent to participate in a nearby training exercise. During practice maneuvers on June 3, 1969, the ship collided with an aircraft carrier and sank, killing 74 sailors who were aboard the ship. Each of these service members were deployed and died in the service of our nation, yet their names have been left off the Vietnam Memorial wall. While the incident occurred about 100 miles outside of the official combat zone, the ship and a majority of the deceased sailors had previously provided naval gunfire off the coast of Vietnam, including during the Tet Offensive. The ship was also set to return to combat after the exercise, and the other ships in the Evans group returned to Vietnamese waters following the exercise.

The U.S.S. Frank E. Evans Act has broad bipartisan support. It has 15 cosponsors spanning the political spectrum, reflecting the nonpartisan consensus that it is time to get this done. On June 19, 2019, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks held a legislative hearing on a series of bills, including S. 849. For two years in a row, the House has unanimously passed this provision within the FY19 and FY20 NDAA.

This year marks the 50 years since we lost these 74 sailors. Honoring their service is already long overdue, but what better way to commemorate their sacrifice than to see their names added. Now is the time. Just like the nearly 60,000 people who died in Vietnam, these 74 heroes left home to give their country their all, and they did not return. We respectfully request that Section 1094 remain in the final conference text so the "Lost 74" are lost no more.

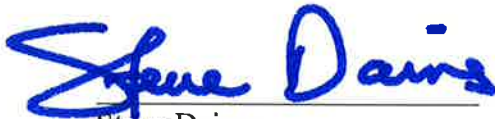
Sincerely,



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Steve Daines
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



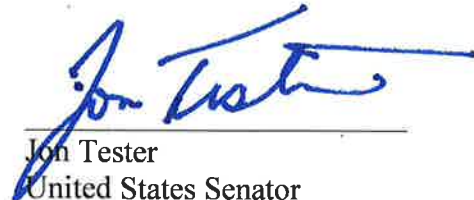
Mike Braun
United States Senator



Bob Menendez
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator