

U.S. Congressman John Barrow (GA-12), a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, visited Arlington National Cemetery today to receive an update on the ongoing efforts of the Department of the Army to rectify mismanagement at the Cemetery, including lax management and oversight, damaged graves, and improper burials. Barrow is a member of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee that has jurisdiction over national veterans' cemeteries.

"Just over a week ago, every American was reminded of the role our nation's service members play in protecting our nation and bringing justice to those who wish us harm," said Congressman Barrow. "The many brave men and women buried at Arlington National Cemetery dedicated their lives to serving our country. They've earned our undying gratitude and respect, and it's our responsibility to ensure that they continue to receive that respect after they have passed on. I appreciate receiving an update on this situation, and I'll continue working to see that these wrongs are corrected and never occur again. Our deceased service members and their families deserve better."

In 2009, a series of news reports brought to light instances of missing headstones and unidentified remains, prompting an investigation by the Army Inspector General (IG). This Army IG report found over 200 discrepancies between existing records and gravesites, burial urns that had been unearthed and dumped in unmarked areas, and more than 100 unmarked graves. Among the other findings cited, the report found numerous failings of leadership and systemic lack of organizational objectives, both at Arlington Cemetery and other Army National Cemeteries.

The House Armed Services Committee conducted a hearing on the Army report in June of 2010, and bicameral legislation was signed into law in December of 2010, requiring the Secretary of the Army to report to Congress on Arlington Cemetery's ability to verify the identity, location, and burial records of gravesites and to give an update on plans to remedy any errors found. This legislation, now Public Law 111-339, requires the Secretary to report on progress in changing the Cemetery's management and oversight structure.

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