

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 4, 2018

The Honorable Mark T. Esper  
Secretary of the Army  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301-1400

RE: Reconsideration of Posthumous Medal of Honor for Corporal David White

Dear Secretary Esper,

We write to express our continued interest in the case of the late Corporal David D. White, whose descendants have been engaged in a process to petition the Department of Defense to posthumously award him the Medal of Honor for his service in the Civil War. Then-Private White served in the 37<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry regiment and is credited with capturing Major General George Washington Custis Lee at the Battle of Sailor's Creek in Virginia on April 6, 1865.

The details of Corporal White's achievement were provided through eyewitness accounts and are excerpted below from a previous letter dated July 8, 2014,<sup>1</sup> that we sent to the Army regarding this Medal of Honor case:

Late on the afternoon of April 6, 1865, Private David D. White, with his regiment, the 37<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, was engaged in the Battle of Sailor's Creek. Unsupported on either flank, but armed with repeating Spencer rifles, the 37<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts had repelled an attack on their left when suddenly their commander, Captain Archibald Hopkins, realized that the enemy had moved into a ravine along their right flank and another attack was imminent. [...]

The 37<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts' change of front to face this attack on their right placed Private White's Company E far uphill, on the regiment's extreme left, near the head of the ravine and in close proximity to the Confederate command center where Major General Custis Lee and Major Robert Stiles were monitoring the battle. Lieutenant Harrie A. Cushman of 37<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Company E came upon Major General Custis Lee and, holding a revolver to the Major General's left cheek, ordered Major General Lee to surrender. [...]

Private White, spotting a high ranking Confederate officer leaving the battlefield, broke through the battle lines to pursue him. When White overtook the officer, White halted Major General Custis Lee at gunpoint and demanded his surrender, to which Major General Lee replied, "I'll never surrender to a d---d private." Private White aimed his rifle at the major general, who began throwing down his

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<sup>1</sup> Sens. Warren and Markey have provided this letter as an addendum.


possessions, including his saber, belt, revolver, haversack, and meerschaum pipe. Lieutenant Morrill, Commander of Company E, arrived to retrieve Major General Lee's sword from the ground, allowing him to surrender the weapon to an officer. Lieutenant Morrill also received Lee's belt, containing a revolver, and told Private White that the officer whom he had just captured was Major General George Washington Custis Lee, son of General Robert E. Lee.

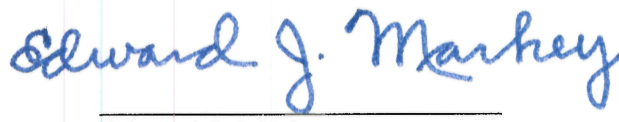
Private White's capture of Major General Custis Lee contributed to the disruption of the enemy command structure, helped to impede the ability of enemy leaders to coordinate effective resistance, and brought an earlier conclusion to the fighting.

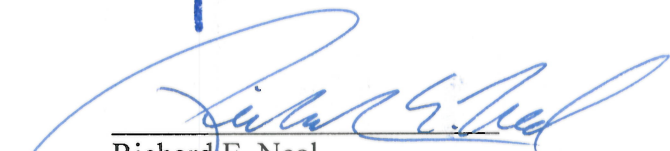
The descendants of the late Corporal White have requested that the Senior Army Decorations Board reconsider its denial of the posthumous Medal of Honor to him. It is our understanding that, upon receipt of recommendations from the Acting Inspector General of the Department of Defense, you have recently directed the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel to have the Senior Army Decorations Board reconsider this decision and conduct further review of relevant supporting documentation.

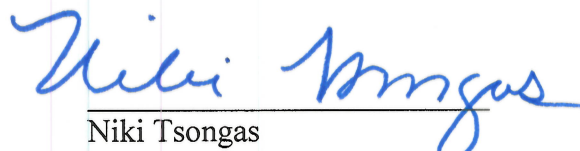
We request to be promptly notified of the outcome of your Department's reconsideration of this Medal of Honor case when it is complete. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress

  
Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress