



## SOCIETY OF THE HONOR GUARD, TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

P.O. Box 1111, Hermitage, PA 16148

[www.tombguard.org](http://www.tombguard.org)

August 9, 2018

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## RE: The Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier – Inaugural Circular Letter

At the close of the American Revolution, General George Washington issued his Circular Letter to the States. This device allowed him to express his heart felt gratitude for the trust placed in him, the unwavering support that met him everywhere and to share his thoughts on matters that would advance the noble purpose for which they had pledged, “their lives, their property and their sacred honor”.

In that spirit of gratitude for the trust placed in those of us who served as Honor Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, to fulfill America’s sacred duty to never, ever forget or forsake those who have, or will serve in our military in times of war or armed conflict, we now share our thoughts; and invite all of America to join us as we prepare for appropriate observance of the Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in Arlington National Cemetery.

### Background:

At 11:00 A.M. on November 11, 2021 the people of the United States will mark the passage of 100 years since the interment of an unidentifiable member of the American Expeditionary Forces of World War I in Arlington National Cemetery. This iconic place of interment has come to be known as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (TUS): it is regarded as America’s most sacred shrine. As intended, it is dedicated to all that have served and sacrificed for America in times of war or armed conflict from the American Revolution to the present and to those yet to come.

Congressman Hamilton Fish, Jr. hoped that: “the grave of this unidentified warrior will become a shrine of patriotism for all ages to come, which will be a source of inspiration, reverence, and love of country for future generations.” Millions of Americans have embraced that vision: their pilgrimage to the Tomb the Unknown Soldier and continued reverence over the generations, eloquently expresses their profound gratitude and commitment to America. We have witnessed the passing of generations, and with them the challenges of their times. We have also witnessed the profound respect, love and pride in the eyes and faces of our fellow Americans. Our service as Honor Guard, has enabled our profound understanding that the Tomb the Unknown Soldier fosters a unifying national identity that transcends our differences of race, religion or politics.

The Society, has planned a number of activities suitable for this solemn occasion of National importance.

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*“Soldiers never die until they are forgotten, Tomb Guards never forget.”*

Each reflects the knowledge gained from our research and what we heard and saw expressed by the American people, and the life transforming experiences as we kept the watch 24 hours a day, 365 days a year whether alone or when surrounded by the heads of State and thousands of visitors.

We intend to issue a series of “circular letters” reporting on our several initiatives as they come on line. In this circular letter, we are pleased to share with you an exciting Centennial initiative made possible by the leadership of Senator Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas) along with Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-Connecticut) who have introduced the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Centennial Commemorative Coin Act, which would direct the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier’s upcoming centennial in 2021. We understand that Senators King and Ernst are also co-sponsors. Congressmen Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio) and Don Beyer (D-Virginia) introduced companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

Please review the press release below, announcing this proposed legislation:

### **Cotton, Blumenthal, Wenstrup, and Beyer Introduce Legislation to Honor Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery**

**Washington, D.C.** — Today, Senator Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas) along with Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-Connecticut) introduced the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Centennial Commemorative Coin Act, which would direct the Secretary of the Treasury to mint commemorative coins in recognition of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier’s upcoming centennial in 2021. Congressmen Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio) and Don Beyer (D-Virginia) introduced companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

“A few months after the World War I Unknown was laid to rest, the commander of the Military District of Washington declined a request to post a sentry at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, saying that visitors to Washington ‘can reach the distantly located tomb only with great difficulty’ and predicting that the Tomb ‘is not and never will be visited by the thousands of visitors as is done in England, France, and Italy.’ Yet one hundred years later, more than four million people pass through the gates of Arlington National Cemetery each year, and most will visit the Tomb to observe the Changing of the Guard. Americans venerate the Tomb and its Sentinels as a shrine to all the brave men and women who have served in our Armed Forces, and especially those who laid down their lives so that we could live in freedom. This commemorative coin will be a fitting tribute to those heroes and to the Sentinels who have guarded our Tomb for 82 years,” **said Senator Cotton.**

“I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this important legislation to honor and memorialize our nation’s unknown servicemembers, who paid the ultimate sacrifice. This commemorative coin will honor the centennial anniversary of the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This solemn tomb is held in the highest regard by our nation—guarded 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, no matter the weather,” **said Senator Blumenthal.**

“Since the first burial in 1921, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier has been a powerful symbol in American history. This commemorative coin will honor the storied legacy of the nameless Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. So long as the Sentinels remain on patrol, the memory of our unknown war dead will never pass from the hearts of the American people,” **said Congressman Brad Wenstrup.**

“Our bipartisan bill would honor American servicemembers who gave the ‘last full measure of devotion’ to their country,” said **Congressman Don Beyer**. “It would also help Americans learn more about the sacrifices of those brave souls interred in Arlington and elsewhere, as we approach the centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. I applaud my colleagues for working together across party lines on this cause which all Americans support.”

**Background:**

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a memorial site at Arlington National Cemetery approved by Congress on March 4, 1921 to honor the unknown soldiers who died in World War I. Inscribed on the back of the Tomb are the words “Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God.” Today, the site also honors unknown soldiers from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is guarded 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and in any weather by Tomb Guard Sentinels. The Sentinels, all volunteers, are considered to be the best of the elite 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), headquartered at Fort Meyer, Virginia.

Proceeds from the sale of the commemorative coins would benefit the National World War I Museum and Memorial for the purposes of assisting in commemorating the centennial. The minting of such coins will not result in any net cost to the United States government.

The Society maintains a website and presence on social media. This and other circular letters will be available on our website. We will continue to update and make announcements on those sites. We welcome your inquiries about our initiatives and want to hear about your initiatives.

*Gavin McIlvenna*

Sergeant Major (Retired) Gavin McIlvenna  
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