

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2025

The Honorable Peter Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Secretary Hegseth:

We write to request the immediate reinstatement of two courageous Arizonans, Pima/Akimel O'odham Marine Pfc. Ira Hayes and Hopi Army Specialist Lori Ann Piestewa, to the Department of Defense (DOD) website. Other mistakenly removed references to Native American veterans and service members have been restored, but information on these two pivotal figures is still missing.

The removal of information on Native American veterans was reportedly done to comply with the DOD's efforts to remove Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives from the website. The sovereign status of Tribal governments and members is political—not racial—as set in U.S. Supreme Court precedent and long-standing legal doctrine. Moreover, efforts by the DOD to recognize any veteran's selfless service to our nation have nothing to do with any type of DEI Initiative.

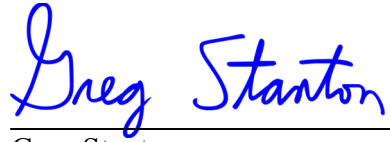
Ira Hayes was one of six Marines who raised the flag at Iwo Jima in 1945. This event was memorialized in a photograph, which was later used to honor all of those who served valiantly in World War II at the Iwo Jima Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. The history of Ira Hayes and his bravery during this pivotal battle and at the flag raising is a point of pride and inspiration for the Gila River Indian Community—as it should be for all citizens of the United States.

Lori Piestewa was the first American service woman killed in action in Operation Iraqi Freedom. She was also the first Hopi woman and the first Native American woman to die in foreign combat in the service of the United States. Former Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano renamed a Phoenix-area mountain and State Route 51 in Piestewa's honor a month after she died in combat, and as Mayor of Phoenix, Congressman Greg Stanton pushed to rename several streets in Phoenix to honor her sacrifice as well.

We must never forget the sacrifices made by Native American veterans and service members throughout our nation's history. Native Americans have continuously served at the highest levels per capita than any other group in the United States.

It is with this history in mind, with our great pride in these incredible Arizonans, that we request the **immediate and full reinstatement of all information pertaining to Pfc. Ira Hayes and Army Specialist Lori Piestewa** to the DOD website. We appreciate your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress