

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 22, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C., 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to request the posthumous commission to Captain earned by U.S. Army Sergeant Milton Holland.

At the onset of the Civil War in 1861, Holland was one of thousands who rushed to join the U.S. Army, only to be turned away by a federal law restricting African-Americans from military service. Following the law's repeal, Holland enlisted with the 5th United States Colored Infantry Regiment, a unit that suffered heavy losses at the Battle of Chaffin's Farm outside Petersburg, Virginia on September 29-30, 1864. When all the white officers had been killed or wounded in battle, Holland commanded his company to victory, demonstrating acts of heroism that would earn him the Medal of Honor, and a recommendation from his commanding officer, Major General Benjamin Butler, that he be promoted to the rank of Captain.

However, the U.S. Department of War denied this commission, due to discriminatory policies that limited the officer ranks to whites only.

Holland's role in, and his acts of bravery during the Battle of Chaffin's Farm have been confirmed by the Army's Chief Historian in a document dated March 6, 2014, that we have attached to this letter, and Major General Butler's promotion request is supported by multiple historical sources.

This injustice led us to introduce legislation in the 113th (H.R. 3364) and 114th (H.R. 1010) Congresses to correct this wrong. By precedent, the House Armed Services Committee defers commission requests to the Department of the Army, and pursuant to 10 U.S. Code § 1563, we have worked to provide the Army with all information available to support Holland's promotion.

However, despite the existing evidence that supports our claims and the opinion from the Army's Chief Historian, which confirms the events that prompted our legislation, the Army, in its April 24, 2014 letter, continues to demand an unreasonable breadth of additional supporting documentation for a Civil War era veteran including resumes and a curriculum vitae. The Army's document is also attached to this letter.

We understand that the military has a duty to protect its promotion processes from undue political influence. However, the Department of War's decision to reject the recommendation of Holland's battlefield commander that he be promoted to Captain was *exclusively* political in nature, owing to the discriminatory laws and policies of the time.

Consequently, we believe our effort to correct this injustice is appropriate, and we ask that you use your powers as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces to right this wrong and posthumously promote U.S. Army Sergeant Milton Holland to Captain. We appreciate your timely consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Steve Stivers
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress