



March 23, 2017

The Honorable Eddie Bernice  
United States House of Representatives  
2458 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

On behalf of the Association of the United States Navy, we would like to pledge our support for H.R. 703, the Apollo I Memorial Act. This bill directs the Department of the Army to construct in Arlington National Cemetery a memorial marker in honor of the three crew members of the mission that became known as the Apollo I mission who died during a launch rehearsal test on January 27, 1967, at the Kennedy Space Center.

On January 27, 1967, NASA Astronauts Command Pilot Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom, Senior Pilot Edward H. White II, and Pilot Roger B. Chaffee were killed in an electrical fire that broke out inside the Apollo I Command Module on Launch Pad 34 at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida.

Command Pilot Virgil Grissom was selected by NASA in 1959 as one of the original seven Mercury astronauts. He piloted the Liberty Bell 7 spacecraft on July 21, 1963, on the second and final Mercury suborbital test flight, served as command pilot on the first manned Gemini flight on March 23, 1965, and was named as Command Pilot of the first Apollo flight. He began his career in the United States Army Air Corps and was a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force at the time of the accident, and he is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Senior Pilot Edward H. White II was selected by NASA as a member of the second astronaut team in 1962. He piloted the Gemini-4 mission, a 4-day mission that took place in June 1965, during which he conducted the first extravehicular activity in the United States human spaceflight program. He was named as Command Module Pilot for the first Apollo flight. He began his career as a cadet in United States Military Academy at West Point and was a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force at the time of the accident.

Pilot Roger B. Chaffee was selected by NASA as part of the third group of astronauts in 1963. He was named as the Lunar Module Pilot for the first Apollo flight. He began his career as a ROTC cadet before commissioning as an ensign in the United States Navy, he was a Lieutenant Commander in the United States Navy at the time of the accident, and he is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

All 3 astronauts were posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor. As Arlington National Cemetery is where we recognize heroes who have passed in the service of our Nation, it is fitting on the 50th anniversary of the Apollo I accident that we acknowledge those astronauts by building a memorial in their honor.

Thank you for taking an active role in such an important issue to the Military and Veteran community by working to improve the lives and careers of those who served our great nation. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at 703-548-5800 or at michael.little@ausn.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Joseph Little" followed by "ABH<sup>2</sup>(AW/Sec)" and "USNR" on a separate line.

Michael J. Little  
Director of Legislative Affairs