

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4070

To designate the medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as the “Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Kettles Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center”.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 25, 2020

Mr. PETERS (for himself and Ms. STABENOW) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs

A BILL

To designate the medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as the “Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Kettles Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center”.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. DESIGNATION OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL**
4 **CHARLES S. KETTLES DEPARTMENT OF VET-**
5 **ERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER.**

6 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

7 (1) Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Kettles was
8 born in Ypsilanti, Michigan, on January 9, 1930.

1 (2) Lieutenant Colonel Kettles was drafted to
2 the Army at age 21, and after attending Officer
3 Candidate School, earned his commission as an
4 armor officer in the United States Army Reserve on
5 February 28, 1953.

6 (3) Lieutenant Colonel Kettles graduated from
7 the Army Aviation School in 1953 before serving ac-
8 tive duty tours in South Korea, Japan, and Thai-
9 land.

10 (4) Lieutenant Colonel Kettles volunteered for
11 active duty in 1963 when the United States was en-
12 gaged in the Vietnam War.

13 (5) Some of the awards and decorations earned
14 by Lieutenant Colonel Kettles include the following:

15 (A) The Medal of Honor.

16 (B) The Distinguished Service Cross.

17 (C) The Legion of Merit.

18 (D) The Distinguished Flying Cross.

19 (E) The Bronze Star Medal with one oak
20 leaf cluster.

21 (F) The Air Medal with numeral 27.

22 (G) The Korean Service Medal.

23 (H) The Vietnam Service Medal with one
24 silver service star and one bronze service star.

25 (I) The Master Aviator Badge.

1 (6) The Medal of Honor citation for Lieutenant
2 Colonel Kettles states, “Major Charles S. Kettles
3 distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and
4 intrepidity while serving as Flight Commander,
5 176th Aviation Company (Airmobile) (Light), 14th
6 Combat Aviation Battalion, Americal Division near
7 Duc Pho, Republic of Vietnam. On 15 May 1967,
8 Major Kettles, upon learning that an airborne infantry
9 unit had suffered casualties during an intense
10 firefight with the enemy, immediately volunteered to
11 lead a flight of six UH-1D helicopters to carry rein-
12 forcements to the embattled force and to evacuate
13 wounded personnel. Enemy small arms, automatic
14 weapons, and mortar fire raked the landing zone, in-
15 flicting heavy damage to the helicopters; however,
16 Major Kettles refused to depart until all helicopters
17 were loaded to capacity. He then returned to the
18 battlefield, with full knowledge of the intense enemy
19 fire awaiting his arrival, to bring more reinforce-
20 ments, landing in the midst of enemy mortar and
21 automatic weapons fire that seriously wounded his
22 gunner and severely damaged his aircraft. Upon de-
23 parting, Major Kettles was advised by another heli-
24 copter crew that he had fuel streaming out of his
25 aircraft. Despite the risk posed by the leaking fuel,

1 he nursed the damaged aircraft back to base. Later
2 that day, the Infantry Battalion Commander re-
3 quested immediate, emergency extraction of the re-
4 maining 40 troops, including four members of Major
5 Kettles' unit who were stranded when their heli-
6 copter was destroyed by enemy fire. With only one
7 flyable UH-1 helicopter remaining, Major Kettles
8 volunteered to return to the deadly landing zone for
9 a third time, leading a flight of six evacuation heli-
10 copters, five of which were from the 161st Aviation
11 Company. During the extraction, Major Kettles was
12 informed by the last helicopter that all personnel
13 were onboard, and departed the landing zone accord-
14 ingly. Army gunships supporting the evacuation also
15 departed the area. Once airborne, Major Kettles was
16 advised that eight troops had been unable to reach
17 the evacuation helicopters due to the intense enemy
18 fire. With complete disregard for his own safety,
19 Major Kettles passed the lead to another helicopter
20 and returned to the landing zone to rescue the re-
21 maining troops. Without gunship, artillery, or tac-
22 tical aircraft support, the enemy concentrated all
23 firepower on his lone aircraft, which was imme-
24 diately damaged by a mortar round that shattered
25 both front windshields and the chin bubble and was

1 further raked by small arms and machine gun fire.
2 Despite the intense enemy fire, Major Kettles main-
3 tained control of the aircraft and situation, allowing
4 time for the remaining eight soldiers to board the
5 aircraft. In spite of the severe damage to his heli-
6 copter, Major Kettles once more skillfully guided his
7 heavily damaged aircraft to safety. Without his cou-
8 rageous actions and superior flying skills, the last
9 group of soldiers and his crew would never have
10 made it off the battlefield. Major Kettles' selfless
11 acts of repeated valor and determination are in
12 keeping with the highest traditions of military serv-
13 ice and reflect great credit upon himself and the
14 United States Army.”.

15 (b) DESIGNATION.—The medical center of the De-
16 partment of Veterans Affairs in Ann Arbor, Michigan,
17 shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known
18 and designated as the “Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Ket-
19 tles Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center” or
20 the “Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Kettles VA Medical
21 Center”.

22 (c) REFERENCE.—Any reference in any law, regula-
23 tion, map, document, paper, or other record of the United
24 States to the medical center referred to in subsection (b)
25 shall be considered to be a reference to the Lieutenant

- 1 Colonel Charles S. Kettles Department of Veterans Affairs
- 2 Medical Center.

