

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 6244

To designate the medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs located in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, as the “Joseph Maxwell Cleland Atlanta Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center”.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 9, 2021

Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia (for herself, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mrs. MCBATH, Mr. ALLEN, Ms. BOURDEAUX, Mr. HICE of Georgia, Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. CARTER of Georgia, and Mr. FERGUSON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs

A BILL

To designate the medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs located in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, as the “Joseph Maxwell Cleland Atlanta 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. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Max Cleland VA Med-
5 ical Center Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Joseph Maxwell Cleland was born August
2 24, 1942, in Atlanta, Georgia, the child of Juanita
3 Kesler Cleland and Joseph Hughie Cleland, a World
4 War II veteran, and grew up in Lithonia, Georgia.

5 (2) Joseph Maxwell Cleland graduated from
6 Stetson University in Florida in 1964, and received
7 his Master's Degree in history from Emory Univer-
8 sity in Atlanta, Georgia.

9 (3) Following his graduation from Stetson Uni-
10 versity, Joseph Maxwell Cleland received a Second
11 Lieutenant's Commission in the Army through its
12 Reserve Officers' Training Corps program.

13 (4) Joseph Maxwell Cleland volunteered for
14 duty in the Vietnam War in 1967, serving with the
15 1st Cavalry Division.

16 (5) On April 8, 1968, during combat at the
17 mountain base at Khe Sanh, Joseph Maxwell
18 Cleland was gravely injured by the blast of a gre-
19 nade, eventually losing both his legs and right arm.

20 (6) Joseph Maxwell Cleland was awarded the
21 Bronze Star for meritorious service and the Silver
22 Star for gallantry in action.

23 (7) In 1970, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was elect-
24 ed to the Georgia Senate as the youngest member

1 and the only Vietnam veteran, where he served until
2 1975.

3 (8) As a Georgia State Senator, Joseph Max-
4 well Cleland authored and advanced legislation to
5 ensure access to public facilities in Georgia for elder-
6 ly and handicapped individuals.

7 (9) In 1976, Joseph Maxwell Cleland began
8 serving as a staffer on the Committee on Veterans'
9 Affairs of the United States Senate.

10 (10) In 1977, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was ap-
11 pointed by President Jimmy Carter to lead the Vet-
12 erans Administration.

13 (11) He was the youngest Administrator of the
14 Veterans Administration ever and the first Vietnam
15 veteran to head the agency.

16 (12) He served as a champion for veterans and
17 led the Veterans Administration to recognize, and
18 begin to treat, post-traumatic stress disorder in vet-
19 erans suffering the invisible wounds of war.

20 (13) Joseph Maxwell Cleland was elected in
21 1982 as Secretary of State of Georgia, the youngest
22 individual to hold the office, and served in that posi-
23 tion for 14 years.

1 (14) In 1996, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was
2 elected to the United States Senate representing
3 Georgia.

4 (15) As a member of the Committee on Armed
5 Services, Joseph Maxwell Cleland advocated for
6 Georgia's military bases, members of the Armed
7 Forces, and veterans, including by championing key
8 personnel issues, playing a critical role in the effort
9 to allow members of the Armed Forces to pass their
10 GI Bill education benefits to their children, and es-
11 tablishing a new veterans cemetery in Canton, Geor-
12 gia.

13 (16) In 2002, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was ap-
14 pointed to the 9/11 Commission.

15 (17) In 2003, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was ap-
16 pointed by President George W. Bush to the Board
17 of Directors for the Export-Import Bank of the
18 United States, where he served until 2007.

19 (18) In 2009, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was ap-
20 pointed by President Barack Obama as Secretary of
21 the American Battle Monuments Commission over-
22 seeing United States military cemeteries and monu-
23 ments overseas, where he served until 2017.

24 (19) In 2010, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was ap-
25 pointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Ar-

1 lington National Cemetery, where he served until
2 2017.

3 (20) Joseph Maxwell Cleland authored three
4 books: Strong at the Broken Places, Going for the
5 Max: 12 Principles for Living Life to the Fullest,
6 and Heart of a Patriot.

7 (21) Joseph Maxwell Cleland received numerous
8 honors and awards over the course of his long and
9 distinguished career.

10 (22) Joseph Maxwell Cleland was a patriot, vet-
11 eran, and lifelong civil servant who proudly served
12 Georgia, the United States, and all veterans and
13 members of the Armed Forces of the United States.

14 (23) On November 9, 2021, at the age of 79,
15 Joseph Maxwell Cleland died, leaving behind a leg-
16 acy of service, sacrifice, and joy.

17 **SEC. 3. JOSEPH MAXWELL CLELAND ATLANTA DEPART-**
18 **MENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CEN-**
19 **TER.**

20 (a) DESIGNATION.—The medical center of the De-
21 partment of Veterans Affairs located in metropolitan At-
22 lanta, Georgia, shall after the date of the enactment of
23 this Act be known and designated as the “Joseph Maxwell
24 Cleland Atlanta Department of Veterans Affairs Medical

1 Center”, or the “Joseph Maxwell Cleland Atlanta VA
2 Medical Center”.

3 (b) REFERENCE.—Any reference in a law, regulation,
4 map, document, paper, or other record of the United
5 States to the medical center referred to in subsection (a)
6 shall be considered to be a reference to the Joseph Max-
7 well Cleland Atlanta Department of Veterans Affairs Med-
8 ical Center.

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