

PUBLIC LAW 117-226—DEC. 9, 2022

MAX CLELAND VA MEDICAL CENTER ACT

Public Law 117–226
117th Congress

An Act

Dec. 9, 2022
[S. 3369]

Max Cleland VA
Medical Center
Act.

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

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Max Cleland VA Medical Center Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

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

(2) Joseph Maxwell Cleland graduated from Stetson University in Florida in 1964, and received his Master’s Degree in history from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia.

(3) Following his graduation from Stetson University, Joseph Maxwell Cleland received a Second Lieutenant’s Commission in the Army through its Reserve Officers’ Training Corps program.

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

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

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

(7) In 1970, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was elected to the Georgia Senate as the youngest member and the only Vietnam veteran, where he served until 1975.

(8) As a Georgia State Senator, Joseph Maxwell Cleland authored and advanced legislation to ensure access to public facilities in Georgia for elderly and handicapped individuals.

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

(10) In 1977, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to lead the Veterans Administration.

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

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

(13) Joseph Maxwell Cleland was elected in 1982 as Secretary of State of Georgia, the youngest individual to hold the office, and served in that position for 14 years.

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

(15) As a member of the Committee on Armed Services, Joseph Maxwell Cleland advocated for Georgia’s military bases, members of the Armed Forces, and veterans, including by championing key personnel issues, playing a critical role in the effort to allow members of the Armed Forces to pass their GI Bill education benefits to their children, and establishing a new veterans cemetery in Canton, Georgia.

(16) In 2002, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was appointed to the 9/11 Commission.

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

(18) In 2009, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was appointed by President Barack Obama as Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission overseeing United States military cemeteries and monuments overseas, where he served until 2017.

(19) In 2010, Joseph Maxwell Cleland was appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Arlington National Cemetery, where he served until 2017.

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

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

(22) Joseph Maxwell Cleland was a patriot, veteran, and lifelong civil servant who proudly served Georgia, the United States, and all veterans and members of the Armed Forces of the United States.

(23) On November 9, 2021, at the age of 79, Joseph Maxwell Cleland died, leaving behind a legacy of service, sacrifice, and joy.

SEC. 3. JOSEPH MAXWELL CLELAND ATLANTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the “Joseph Maxwell Cleland Atlanta Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center” or the “Joseph Maxwell Cleland Atlanta VA Medical Center”.

(b) REFERENCE.—Any reference in a law, regulation, map, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the medical center referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the Joseph Maxwell Cleland Atlanta Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Approved December 9, 2022.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S. 3369:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 168 (2022):

July 28, considered and passed Senate.

Nov. 14, 17, considered and passed House.

