

Public Law 117–236
117th Congress

An Act

Dec. 20, 2022
[H.R. 6863]

To designate the medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Memphis, Tennessee, as the “Lt. Col. Luke Weathers, Jr. VA Medical Center”.

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

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., was born December 16, 1922, in Grenada, Mississippi, then moved to Memphis, Tennessee, at age five.

(2) Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., graduated from Booker T. Washington High School and is an alumnus of Xavier University in New Orleans.

(3) Upon his graduation, Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., enlisted in one of the first training programs for Black pilots, beginning his journey as a Tuskegee Airman.

(4) Within his first few years active in the war, Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., named his plane “Spirit of Beale Street”, in honor of his hometown, Memphis, Tennessee. He flew this plane with the “Red Tails”.

(5) He was credited with shooting down German planes while protecting United States Army Air Corps bombers and shooting down two Messerschmitt 109s in Italy while escorting a damaged B–24 Liberator bomber.

(6) During his military service, he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

(7) Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., received numerous honors and awards throughout his long and distinguished career.

(8) Among them, he was presented with an Air Medal with 7 clusters and an American Theater Ribbon Victory Medal during his military service.

(9) Following the war, Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., returned to Memphis, receiving a hero’s welcome and a key to the city.

(10) On July 13, 1947, he married LaVerne Nailling at St. Therese-Little Flowers Catholic Church in Memphis.

(11) In 1960, he accepted a job with the Federal Aviation Administration (hereinafter, the “FAA”) as an air traffic control specialist in Anchorage, Alaska.

(12) In 1965, Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., moved back to Memphis, becoming the first Black air traffic controller in Memphis.

(13) Weathers later held positions with the FAA in Atlanta, Georgia, and the District of Columbia, where he eventually

retired in 1985, after serving as a reservist in the military for 23 years.

(14) During retirement, Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., remained active with the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. and continued to support African Americans in the military.

(15) In 1995, Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., moved to Tucson, Arizona, shortly after marrying Jacqueline Moore Weathers.

(16) In 2007, Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., and the Tuskegee Airmen were honored with a Congressional Gold Medal.

(17) On October 15, 2011, Luke Joseph Weather, Jr., died in Tucson, Arizona, at the age of 90, leaving behind his wife, two sons and daughters, 12 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren as well as a legacy of countless lives he touched.

(18) On January 20, 2012, Lieutenant Colonel Luke Joseph Weathers, Jr., was interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

SEC. 2. DESIGNATION OF THE LT. COL. LUKE WEATHERS, JR. VA MEDICAL CENTER.

The medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs located in Memphis, Tennessee, shall, after the date of the enactment of this Act, be known and designated as the “Lt. Col. Luke Weathers, Jr. VA Medical Center”. Any reference in any law, regulation, map, document, paper, or other record of the United States to such medical center shall be considered to be a reference to the Lt. Col. Luke Weathers, Jr. VA Medical Center.

Approved December 20, 2022.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 6863:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 168 (2022):

Nov. 14, considered and passed House.

Dec. 6, considered and passed Senate.

