



September 11, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

We write to demand that you immediately reverse your Department's shameful decision on August 15, 2025¹ to grant military funeral honors to former Air Force Senior Airman Ashli Babbitt. This decision is not only indefensible and inconsistent with 10 U.S. Code § 985, but also deeply disrespectful to the service members who have honorably worn the uniform of the United States.

Ashli Babbitt was an active participant during the violent Capitol riot on January 6, 2021, an insurrection that sought to overturn the certification of the 2020 presidential election results, block the peaceful transfer of power, and betray the oath to support and defend the Constitution that she herself had once sworn as an airman.

U.S. Capitol Police repeatedly ordered² Ashli Babbitt and other insurrectionists to step back from the locked and barricaded door leading to the House Speaker's Lobby, but the mob pressed forward, breaking the glass with their hands, flagpoles, helmets, and other objects until it shattered.³ Babbitt then attempted to force her way inside by climbing through the door's broken window, where a Capitol Police Officer intervened to protect dozens of House members and staff cornered nearby.⁴ Her conduct was a betrayal of her oath and a discredit to the uniform she once wore.

Under 10 U.S. Code § 985, the Department of Defense is authorized to deny military funeral honors in military cemeteries to any individual whose actions have brought "discredit upon the person's service (or former service)." These honors are not a blanket entitlement; they are a solemn recognition reserved for those whose service and personal conduct during and after their service embodies honor, loyalty, and sacrifice. To extend such recognition to Babbitt is to erode the sanctity of those honors and to demean the memory of every veteran laid to rest who upheld the law, honored their oath and served with dignity.

¹ CNN. "[US Air Force to provide military funeral honors for rioter killed on January 6](#)" CNN, August 28, 2025.

² NBC News. "[Officer who shot Ashli Babbitt during Capitol riot breaks silence](#)." NBC News, August 26, 2021.

³ U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Columbia. "[Department of Justice Closes Investigation into the Death of Ashli Babbitt](#)." Press Release, April 14, 2021.

⁴ NBC News. "[Officer who shot Ashli Babbitt during Capitol riot breaks silence](#)." NBC News, August 26, 2021.

We strongly urge you to rescind this decision immediately. To do otherwise is to abandon the Department's rules, cheapen the meaning of military honors, and send a dangerous message that betrayal of country and insurrection against our democracy are compatible with the values and standards all former military personnel are expected to uphold long after their service ends.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruben Gallego". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ruben" and last name "Gallego" clearly distinguishable.

Ruben Gallego
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Duckworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tammy" and last name "Duckworth" clearly distinguishable.

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator