

For Immediate Release



Contact: Miles Migliara, Chief Communications Officer
(573) 528-4219 | media@amvets.org

Statement from AMVETS regarding the Pentagon's denial of its permit application for Rolling to Remember

WASHINGTON (MAY 3, 2021) – AMVETS received a Friday afternoon call and letter from the Department of Defense's Washington Headquarters Services, formally notifying AMVETS that the permit requested a year earlier to use the Pentagon's parking lots on May 30 for the "Rolling to Remember" pro-veterans demonstration was denied.

The 32-year tradition of staging in the Pentagon parking lots before thousands ride motorcycles past the national war memorials and around the National Mall on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend is vastly important to countless Americans, especially veterans and Gold Star families.

The stated reason for the application denial was the COVID-19 pandemic, citing "substantial" community spread in Arlington County, Virginia, and the size of the proposed demonstration.

"The biggest disappointment in the Pentagon's denial was that AMVETS was ignored for months as its professional staff in Washington requested numerous times an opportunity to hear the Defense Department's concerns and present a COVID-19 safety plan to the Pentagon's decision makers before rendering a decision," said AMVETS National Commander Jan Brown. "In the end, the Pentagon decided to deny the application without any meaningful communication with AMVETS."

AMVETS remains confident that they will host a safe, reasonable demonstration outdoors that incorporates social distancing, masking where appropriate, and sanitation stations. AMVETS took other prevention steps, including canceling the rally in front of the Lincoln Memorial because AMVETS didn't believe social distancing would be possible there.

AMVETS is a charter member of the Biden Administration's newly formed COVID-19 Community Corps, a campaign to increase vaccine confidence while reinforcing basic prevention measures.

AMVETS National Executive Director Joe Chenelly appeared on screen with Vice President Kamala Harris at the launch of the COVID-19 Community Corps April 1, as the Pentagon was still considering the application, which was filed in May 2020.

"The administration included AMVETS in this new group as 'a trusted voice in communities across the United States,' but the Pentagon wouldn't have a conversation with us to share their concerns and give us the chance to address them before deciding to refuse our application," Chenelly said. "If we had those conversations and still came to the conclusion that safety was not possible, we would have pulled our application ourselves. We told the Pentagon that."

As regional government and law enforcement officials understand, several thousand motorcycle-riding demonstrators are still planning to come to Washington over Memorial Day weekend to remember the fallen and demonstrate. It is imperative they have a safe place to rally that Sunday morning. The Pentagon's expansive parking space was ideal to ensure social distancing. AMVETS remains committed to coordinating a safe, coordinated staging area for those demonstrators.

"But there are no options with as much space and convenient routes to the memorials, meaning it will be more difficult, disruptive, and expensive than if the Pentagon parking lots were available," Chenelly said. "We don't have time to worry about who has said no to us, at this point. We are now squarely focused on pulling together everything we need in the final few weeks before Rolling to Remember."

AMVETS is grateful for the many lawmakers who urged the Pentagon to open communication with AMVETS before this decision was made.

The latest information on where Rolling to Remember will stage, the demonstration route, and what to expect may be found at rollingtoremember.com.

AMVETS is a Congressionally chartered, nonpartisan veterans service organization, representing the interests of more than 19 million veterans. Its membership requirements are the most inclusive of any veterans service organization, open to all who have served in the United States military regardless of when or where.

###