

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4404

COMMITTEES:

JUDICIARY

ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES

COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
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JOINT ECONOMIC
COMMITTEE

July 28, 2021

Chairman Jon Tester
Committee on Veterans Affairs
Russell Senate Building – Room 412
Washington, D.C.

Ranking Member Jerry Moran
Committee on Veterans Affairs
Russell Senate Building – Room 412
Washington, D.C.

Chairman Mark Takano
Committee on Veterans Affairs
Cannon House Office Building – 364
Washington, D.C.

Ranking Member Mike Bost
Committee on Veterans Affairs
Cannon House Office Building – 364
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Moran, Chairman Takano, and Ranking Member Bost:

We, the members of the Utah delegation, write to recommend that the Provo Veterans Center located at 360 South State Street Building C Suite 103 in Orem, Utah be renamed after Colonel Gail S. Halvorsen, affectionately known as the “Candy Bomber,” who performed military service of an extraordinarily distinguished character during the Berlin Airlift in 1948.

Halvorsen’s creativity and compassion helped to heal the wounds of the Second World War and softened the relationship between an occupied Germany and the United States. Col. Halvorsen exemplifies the best of our brave veterans who have each demonstrated service before self.

Gail Halvorsen was assigned to Germany in 1948 to work as an airlift pilot where he flew C-47 and C-54 cargo planes as part of Operation “Vittles.” While on mission at Tempelhof Airport in Berlin, Halvorsen noticed a group of German children standing just outside the barb wire fence. The children were destitute and clearly had very little to eat. Halvorsen gave the children two sticks of gum he had in his pocket, which they split into little pieces to share among themselves. The looks of joy on their faces left an indelible impression. Colonel Halvorsen was deeply affected by the experience and wanted to do more to help. He promised the children he would drop more candy to them from his plane as he flew his regular airlift missions.

After enlisting his copilot in the project, Halvorsen began attaching their candy rations to miniature parachutes which he dropped from their plane to the starving children below. The children of Berlin gave Halvorsen many nicknames including “Uncle Wiggly Wings,” “The Chocolate Flier,” “The Gum Drop Kid,” and “The Chocolate Uncle.” He eventually became known around the world as “The Candy Bomber.”

As the candy drops continued, word of “Operation Little Vittles” reached the United States. American families, schoolchildren, and candymakers began contributing candy and homemade parachutes that Halvorsen and other pilots could drop.

When the Berlin Airlift ended, an estimated 250,000 parachutes with 21 tons of candy had been dropped by Halvorsen and his fellow airmen as a part of Operation Little Vittles. Halvorsen's candy drops had a significant impact on Berliners' public perception of America. He retired from the military in 1974 after 31 years of service and more than 8,000 hours of flying time. Since his retirement, Halvorson has continued his humanitarian and community service. He has voluntarily represented the U.S. Airforce and the United States abroad and has re-enacted his famous candy drops several times in Berlin, the Middle East, and around the world in an effort to bring peace and relief. He was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, a German Order of Merit, an Air Force Commendation Medal, and a Medal for Humane Action. Halvorsen has also been a tremendous boon to his community through church service.

His non-profit organization, the Gail S. Halvorsen Aviation Education Foundation, advances aviation education, promotes youth leadership development, enhances community capacity for emergency response, and encourages humanitarian service on macro- and micro-levels. The Foundation also provides education by giving free lectures and multimedia presentations on aviation, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) topics at local schools, community groups, and at its own facility at the Spanish Fork Airport in Spanish Fork, Utah.

Renaming the Provo Vet Center in Orem, Utah after Colonel Halvorsen is a fitting and deserved recognition for such an exemplary U.S. Air Force veteran and American hero. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

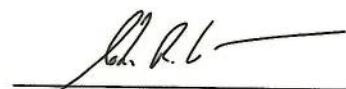
Sincerely,



Michael S. Lee
United States Senator



Mitt Romney
United States Senator



John Curtis
Member of Congress



Blake Moore
Member of Congress



Burgess Owens
Member of Congress



Chris Stewart
Member of Congress