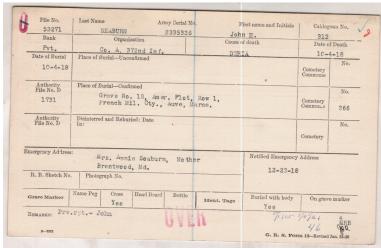


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Contact: Lacey McNiel, <u>media@firstliberty.org</u> Direct: 972-941-4453



(Burial card for Private John Henry Seaburn, Jr., honored by the Bladensburg World War I Veterans Memorial. Photo may be used with credit to, "First Liberty Institute" or "FirstLiberty.org")

## Descendants of Bladensburg WWI Dead Named on Peace Cross Among 38 Briefs Asking U.S. Supreme Court to Save Memorial

Family members of fallen soldiers honored at Bladensburg WWI Veterans Memorial file brief with the Supreme Court of the United States in support of historic "gravestone"

**Washington, DC**–Just before Christmas family members of fallen soldiers named on the Bladensburg World War I Veterans memorial filed a "friend-of-the-court" <u>brief</u> urging the Supreme Court of the United States to save the memorial from bulldozing. First Liberty Institute represents The American Legion in in *The American Legion, et al. v. American Humanist Association, et al.*, defending the nearly 90-year-old memorial. An extraordinary number of organizations and individuals also filed briefs in support of maintaining the memorial, including:

- The Veterans of Foreign Wars and National WWI Museum and Memorial
- Medal of Honor Recipients
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Retired military Generals and Admirals
- Major General Patrick Brady and Veterans Groups Erecting and Maintaining War Memorials
- 84 Republican and Democratic Members of Congress

- 30 State Attorneys General
- Maryland Attorney General
- Maryland Elected Officials
- Town of Taos, New Mexico
- International Municipal Lawyers Association and National Association of Counties
- The Islam and Religious Freedom Action Team of the Religious Freedom Institute
- The Jewish Coalition for Religious Liberty

"No one understands why we need to preserve the Bladensburg WWI Veterans Memorial more than the family members whose loved ones are honored there," said Kelly Shackelford, President, CEO and Chief Counsel for First Liberty Institute. "For nearly 100 years the families of these 49 sons of Prince George's County have considered the Bladensburg Veterans Memorial their sons' gravestone. We cannot allow their memory to be bulldozed."

In the brief, attorneys for descendants of those honored at Bladensburg argue, "Because these soldiers died too young to leave children of their own, amici, their nieces and nephew, seek to preserve their legacies. To that end, amici desire that the Peace Cross be allowed to stand, safeguarding the memory of their family members' service across generations. Amici would experience pain, distress, and betrayal if the very government for which their family members fought destroys or disfigures the monument that honors their families' sacrifices."

The Bladensburg World War I Veterans Memorial is a cross-shaped memorial erected in 1925 by local Gold-Star mothers and a local post of The American Legion to honor 49 Prince George's County men who gave their lives while serving in WWI. The memorial was built in a cross shape to recall the cross-shaped grave markers standing over the countless American graves on the Western Front of that war.

Oral arguments in the case will be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court on February 27, 2019.

To learn more, visit <u>FirstLiberty.org/Bladensburg</u>.

Links to all the briefs are available <u>here</u>.

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## About First Liberty Institute

<u>First Liberty Institute</u> is a non-profit public interest law firm and the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

To arrange an interview, contact Lacey McNiel at <u>media@firstliberty.org</u> or by calling 972-941-4453.