

**STATEMENT OF THE
RHODE ISLAND HERITAGE HALL OF FAME
ON ITS PROPOSED INDUCTION OF
GENERAL MICHAEL FLYNN**

The Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3), educational and cultural organization with a volunteer Board of Directors. It is supported by private donations from board members, generous inductees and by grants from the Heritage Harbor Foundation and proceeds from its annual induction banquet. It was founded in 1965 by *Providence Journal* reporter Frank Lanning.

The Hall of Fame holds annual induction banquets and historical convocations. It maintains an extensive website containing detailed biographies of its members. It also publishes books on its inductees, and it provides detailed information about Hall of Fame members in response to queries from historians, genealogists, journalists, descendants of deceased inductees, school children, and the general public.

The Hall of Fame fosters pride in Rhode Island by recognizing and honoring its achievers from all walks of life and by making those achievers and their contributions much more widely-known and appreciated. The Hall of

Fame tells the entire story of Rhode Island through the medium of biography in the belief that our people make our history.

The Heritage Hall of Fame directors spend many cumulative hours in these various tasks – which have now come under sharp criticism because they selected Rhode Island General Michael Flynn for induction in 2024.

General Flynn is only one of ten nominees, yet his selection has caused a storm of protest. From the year 2000 through 2022, the Hall has chosen and inducted 221 living Rhode Islanders. Not one of them prompted our receipt of a single e-mail or letter, either of opposition or support, when their induction was formally announced.

Thus far, even prior to a formal announcement, General Flynn has been the target of 102 missives. One-hundred of these denounce his selection while vilifying the Hall of Fame. Most messages are brief and use foul language. Two wish that certain directors experience early death!

Some uninformed and fanatical critics suggest we are a right-wing subversive organization. They are ignorant of the fact that the other nine inductees include 3 leaders of minority communities (Black and Native American) 2 distinguished, long-serving Democrat politicians, 2 leaders in the field of cancer research, a businessman and philanthropist who has crusaded

for honesty and reform in local government, and a Catholic priest who won the Silver Star in Vietnam and is now a national leader in veterans' affairs with an emphasis on their mental health.

Never have one of our 58 induction ceremonies been marked with protests or even minor disturbances. The violent and vile coordinated protest towards General Flynn clearly indicates that our peaceful, celebratory string of inductions will be broken to the detriment of our other 9 inductees, our attendees, our directors, and our induction venue.

The Board has reliable information that the national rioting and protest movement surging since 2020, and currently manifested in the pro-Palestine demonstrations, will be visited upon our annual induction ceremony should it involve General Flynn.

Accordingly, the Hall of Fame Board will defer Flynn's induction to a more peaceful and rational time and a more secure place. Discretion is the better part of valor.

A majority of the Board that voted to induct Flynn relied upon his 30-year record of public service and his high attainments. It accepted as true the grant of clemency from the president of the United States asserting that no crime was actually committed and the fact that charges against Flynn were

dropped by a weaponized Department of Justice. Those who think otherwise are entitled to their opinion. This is still America.

This detailed statement contains the full and factual position of the Hall of Fame, and, in our opinion, requires no further elaboration.

It does admit, however, in agreement with *Providence Journal* columnist Mark Patinkin, a worthy 2022 Hall of Fame inductee, that the Hall of Fame exhibited “poor timing” by choosing to honor General Flynn in this turbulent and politically-charged environment.

**Dr. Patrick T. Conley
Rhode Island Heritage
Hall of Fame Past President
and Volunteer General
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