

Congress took action where the Supreme Court didn't to curb Westboro Baptist Church's followers from protesting the funerals of fallen troops and veterans.

President Obama signed into law Monday the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act that includes language aimed at protecting service members funerals. The church based in Kansas is best known for staging protests at service members funerals to protest the service of homosexuals in the military.

In 2011, the Supreme Court ruled the First Amendment protected Westboro's right to protest the funerals. Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in the majority opinion that "as a nation we have chosen ... to protect even hurtful speech on public issues to ensure that we do not stifle public debate

The new law extends bans on picketing funeral services of troops and veterans from 150 feet to 300 feet, and prohibits protests from being conducted up to two hours before and after a funeral. Previously the ban was for an hour before and after.

Violations are punishable by a fine and up to a year in jail

"The graves of our veterans are hallowed ground, and obviously we all defend our Constitution and the First Amendment and free speech," Obama said at the White House ceremony Monday. "But we also believe that when men and women die in the service of their country and are laid to rest, it should be done with the utmost honor and respect."

The other half of the law dictates the medical care for the thousands of service members and families afflicted with illnesses from ingesting contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, N.C. between 1957 and 1987. Read more [here](#) about the fight families have sustained for Congress to acknowledge the effect the water has had on up to one million troops and their family members