

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

## **House Bill 56**

### **Sponsor Statement**

#### **Establishing May 15<sup>th</sup> as Hmong American Veterans Day**

House Bill 56 recognizes and honors the Hmong veterans who fought alongside the United States during the Vietnam War, by proclaiming that May 15<sup>th</sup> be recognized throughout the State of Alaska as Hmong-American Veterans Day, for this year and years to come.

There are an estimated 260,000 Hmong-Americans living in the United States with an estimated 3,500 Hmong-Americans living in Alaska. Many of these Alaskans are veterans and all have been impacted by the legacy of the Hmong fighting for the United States in the Vietnam War. Beginning in the 1960's, the Central Intelligence Agency began recruiting Hmong people to help U.S. soldiers in the fight against communism. Between 1962 and 1975, about 12,000 Hmong soldiers died fighting against the Laotians. After the US withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975, the Lao kingdom was overthrown by the communist party and the Hmong became targets. The Hmong people were displaced and forced to relocate from Laos to Thailand, with some ending up in UN refugee camps. It has been estimated that 30,000 Hmong were killed by the communists while trying to reach refuge in Thailand. All in all, over 100,000 Hmong people died as a result of both the Vietnam and "Secret" Wars.

The Hmong people put their faith in the United States government, which promised them citizenship and veteran status after the war. It's taken over fifty years for them to receive the rights they were promised at that time, but still- we must do better. By recognizing May 15<sup>th</sup> as Hmong-American Veteran's Day, we can celebrate and honor the Hmong who were lost, the sacrifices made to this country, while bringing pride to their families.

We ask for your support for HB56, recognizing May 15<sup>th</sup> as Hmong-American Veterans' Day.