

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 10

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATOR WIELECHOWSKI

Introduced: 2/20/25

Referred: State Affairs

A RESOLUTION

1 **Encouraging the United States Congress to award Hmong veterans of the Vietnam War**
2 **the Congressional Gold Medal.**

3 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 **WHEREAS** the Hmong played a crucial and often overlooked role in the Vietnam
5 War, particularly in Laos, where the Hmong were recruited by the United States Central
6 Intelligence Agency as part of a covert operation known as the "Secret War"; and

7 **WHEREAS** this involvement had profound consequences for the Hmong people,
8 leading to heavy casualties, mass displacement, and ongoing struggles for recognition and
9 support; and

10 **WHEREAS** the conflict in the Vietnam War was not confined to Vietnam, instead
11 spreading to neighboring Laos, where the North Vietnamese Army used the Ho Chi Minh
12 Trail to transport troops and supplies; and

13 **WHEREAS**, beginning in 1960, to disrupt that supply chain, the United States
14 Central Intelligence Agency recruited and trained as many as 100,000 Hmong soldiers,
15 forming Special Guerrilla Units under the leadership of General Vang Pao; and

16 **WHEREAS**, in July 1961, Brigadier General Edward G. Lansdale wrote in a memo to

1 General Maxwell D. Taylor that about 9,000 Hmong soldiers were conducting guerrilla
2 operations in adversarial-dominated territories in Laos; and

3 **WHEREAS** the Hmong soldiers played a critical role in intercepting enemy forces,
4 gathering intelligence, and protecting United States Air Force radar installations; and

5 **WHEREAS** Hmong soldiers flew thousands of combat missions in support of the
6 United States Air Force, engaged in conventional and guerrilla warfare, despite being heavily
7 outnumbered, and rescued downed American pilots, often at great personal risk; and

8 **WHEREAS** approximately 40,000 Hmong soldiers were killed, 50,000 Hmong
9 soldiers were seriously wounded, and 3,000 Hmong soldiers went missing in action; and

10 **WHEREAS** Hmong soldiers died at 10 times the rate of United States soldiers in the
11 Vietnam War; and

12 **WHEREAS**, as the war progressed, boys as young as 12 were conscripted into service
13 because of the immense casualties suffered; and

14 **WHEREAS**, after the United States withdrew from Vietnam, the Pathet Lao, an
15 adversary group allied with North Vietnam, seized control of Laos in 1975; and

16 **WHEREAS** the Hmong faced retaliation for allying with the United States; and

17 **WHEREAS** the new Lao government labeled the Hmong as enemies of the state and
18 initiated systematic efforts to eliminate the Hmong; and

19 **WHEREAS** reports indicate that chemical weapons were used against Hmong
20 villages and thousands of Hmong were executed, with many more sent to reeducation camps,
21 where conditions were brutal; and

22 **WHEREAS** some Hmong fighters retreated into the jungle and continued to resist the
23 government for years; and

24 **WHEREAS** an estimated 138,000 Hmong fled across the Mekong River to refugee
25 camps in Thailand; and

26 **WHEREAS** many Hmong drowned while attempting to cross the Mekong River,
27 while others died from disease and starvation in the camps; and

28 **WHEREAS** the name Hmong is the English pronunciation of the name by which the
29 Hmong people have chosen to be identified by; and

30 **WHEREAS**, although historical Chinese records do not provide extensive details on
31 the origins of the name Hmong, many Hmong-Americans and Hmong-Laotians associate the

1 name with meanings such as "free" or "fate," reflecting the Hmong's enduring struggle against
 2 oppression and resilience throughout history; and

3 **WHEREAS** the United States, France, Canada, and Australia accepted Hmong
 4 refugees, with the United States accepting the majority of the refugees; and

5 **WHEREAS** approximately 50,000 Hmong veterans reside in the United States, of
 6 which approximately 22 Hmong veterans of the Vietnam War call the state home; and

7 **WHEREAS** the state has a Hmong population of over 5,500, which is the third
 8 highest in the country; and

9 **WHEREAS** Alaska is home to a vibrant Hmong community, which has established
 10 numerous organizations that provide cultural preservation, economic development, and social
 11 support for Hmong residents across the state; and

12 **WHEREAS** the United States government formally recognized Hmong contributions
 13 for the first time on May 15, 1997, when it dedicated the Laos Memorial at the Arlington
 14 National Cemetery; and

15 **WHEREAS**, in 2019, Alaska passed House Bill 56, establishing May 15 as Hmong-
 16 American Veterans Day to recognize the service of Hmong-American veterans; and

17 **WHEREAS** several United States cities and states have adopted July 22 as Lao-
 18 Hmong Recognition Day, but federal recognition remains limited; and

19 **WHEREAS**, on November 9, 2023, Senator Gary C. Peters with cosponsors Senators
 20 Ron Johnson, Tammy Baldwin, Thomas Tillis, Amy Klobuchar, Debbie Stabenow, Sheldon
 21 Whitehouse, and John Tester introduced S. 3271, The Hmong Congressional Gold Medal Act,
 22 which was referred to committee but received no further action; and

23 **WHEREAS** the Congressional Gold Medal is the oldest and highest civilian award in
 24 the United States and is bestowed by vote of the United States Congress and signed into law
 25 by the President as an expression of the highest national appreciation for distinguished
 26 achievements and contributions by individuals or institutions; and

27 **WHEREAS** the tradition of awarding the Congressional Gold Medal originated
 28 during the American Revolution, and is now awarded to recipients who are recognized for
 29 achievements that have significantly shaped the United States; and

30 **WHEREAS** Congress must pass legislation to approve each Congressional Gold
 31 Medal and, upon enactment, each Congressional Gold Medal is uniquely designed and cast in

1 gold by the United States Mint, reflecting the singular nature of the honor and distinguishing
2 it from other national awards; and

3 **WHEREAS** United States citizenship is not a requirement for receiving the
4 Congressional Gold Medal, underscoring its role in recognizing contributions to the nation's
5 history and culture from individuals and groups across the world; and

6 **WHEREAS** other allied forces who fought alongside the United States have been
7 honored with the Congressional Gold Medal, including the Filipino World War II veterans, in
8 recognition of the veterans' bravery and sacrifices in defense of freedom; and

9 **WHEREAS** the Congressional Gold Medal is a fitting and long-overdue honor for the
10 Hmong veterans of the Vietnam War, whose unparalleled bravery, sacrifice, and unwavering
11 commitment to securing freedom alongside United States forces exemplified the highest
12 ideals of valor and service;

13 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature encourages the United States
14 Congress to award Hmong veterans of the Vietnam War the Congressional Gold Medal.

15 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Donald J. Trump, President
16 of the United States; the Honorable JD Vance, Vice President of the United States and
17 President of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Douglas Collins, United States Secretary of
18 Veterans Affairs; the Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives;
19 the Honorable John Thune, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Hakeem
20 Jeffries, Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Jerry Moran,
21 Chair of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the U.S. Senate; the Honorable Mike Bost,
22 Chair of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives; the
23 Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the
24 Honorable Nicholas Begich, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in
25 Congress; and all other members of the 119th United States Congress.