

SJR 10

By Senator Wielechowski

Urging Congress to Award the Hmong
Veterans of the Vietnam War the
Congressional Gold Medal



History of Hmong Veterans

Who are the Hmong?

Ethnic group from China, Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand.

Recruited by the CIA in 1961 for the Secret War in Laos.

Played a crucial role in disrupting enemy supply lines and rescuing downed American pilots.



The Secret War and U.S. Alliance

Hmong soldiers, led by General Vang Pao, fought alongside the U.S. against the North Vietnamese Army in Laos.

U.S. involvement in Laos was covert, making Hmong sacrifices largely unknown to the American public.

Over 35,000 Hmong soldiers died, with many more wounded.



Aftermath of the Vietnam War

1975: U.S. withdrawal left Hmong forces vulnerable to retaliation from the new Lao government.

Thousands were executed, sent to reeducation camps, or forced into hiding.

Over 138,000 Hmong refugees fled to Thailand, with many later resettling in the U.S.



Hmong Integration into the U.S.

The U.S. accepted Hmong refugees, many of whom settled in Alaska, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and California.

Continued struggles with assimilation and cultural preservation.



Recognition and Hmong-American Veterans Day

1997: U.S. government formally recognized Hmong contributions with the Laos Memorial in Arlington.

2019: Alaska established Hmong-American Veterans Day (May 15) to honor their sacrifices.

Ongoing efforts to secure official federal recognition




The Push for the Congressional Gold Medal

U.S. allies, including Filipino WWII veterans, have been honored with the Congressional Gold Medal.

U.S. Senator Gary C. Peters introduced S. 3271 – The Hmong Congressional Gold Medal Act in 2023, but it stalled in committee.

The medal is the highest civilian honor in the U.S., requiring an act of Congress to be awarded.



The background of the slide features several Congressional Gold Medals. Some are resting on a dark blue velvet display case, while others are suspended by their red, white, and blue ribbons. The medals are circular and gold-colored, with the United States Capitol dome embossed in the center. The words "CONGRESSIONAL" and "GOLD MEDAL" are inscribed around the perimeter of the medals. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the metallic sheen of the medals against the dark background.

Congressional Gold Medal History

What is the Congressional Gold Medal?

Oldest civilian honor awarded by Congress.

Recognizes outstanding achievements and contributions to U.S. history.

Each medal is unique and designed by the U.S. Mint.

One medal struck and put on display at location of choice by honoree.

Bronze Replicas for sale by US Mint

Congressional Gold Medal Recipients

Historically awarded to figures such as George Washington and the Wright Brothers.

Recognized foreign allies, including Filipino WWII veterans in 2016.

The Hmong's case is similar—bravery, sacrifice, and an unfulfilled promise from the U.S.

Call to Action

Why it matters: The Hmong veterans fought alongside the U.S. but were never granted a worthy veteran award.

Current status: Advocacy efforts continue to push for Congressional action.

What you can do: Vote to move this resolution out of committee and vote for it when it comes to the floor.



Questions?

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