

May Ramirez-Xiong

March 6, 2019

Re: HB 56 – To Make May 15 “Hmong-American Veterans Day”.

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is May, and I support HB 56. I am writing this letter in hopes to address some of your reservations regarding HB 56. You may have questions concerning whether to support HB 56 to make May 15th “Hmong-American Veterans Day” and questions of how this day differs from Veterans Day, or why dedicate a day for the Hmong-American Veterans when there are so many different groups throughout the world that have contributed and fought for our Country. With one certainty, there is no story superior to another, but also, no story should be told while the other story ought to be undisclosed. What took place over forty years ago during the Vietnam War remained a tragic loss for all involved, but it is the story of the Hmong Veterans and their participation in the “Secret War” that for decades was concealed. May 15th signifies the end of the last battle, but also a new beginning for the Hmong People. This day dedicated to recognize the Hmong Veterans for their sacrifices, their loss, and their efforts should be no different from any other day; to name a few: Indigenous Peoples Day, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, and the Alaska Police Memorial Day.

The Hmong Veterans’ contribution in the Vietnam War has been undisclosed for decades. It was during the Vietnam War, that the CIA recruited the Hmong people to prevent the North Vietnam from supplying to their troops and from sending more troops to the South. The Hmong Veterans interfered with the supply link in the Ho Chi Minh Trail otherwise known as “The Blood Road” (US History, n.d.). The U.S. could not block the Ho Chi Minh Trail with ground forces because the countries it passed through were neutral. Hence, the need of Hmong forces and the reason it became the Secret War. This trail was the heart of the war and carried as many as 20, 000 Vietcong soldiers a month to the South. Thousands and thousands of Hmong Veterans including civilians, woman and children perished during this war. Nevertheless, the Hmong Veterans interceded distributions through the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It was the Hmong Veterans, the “fierce jungle fighters who rescued downed U.S. aircrews, gathered military intelligence and fought the communists to a stalemate” (Shay, 2009).

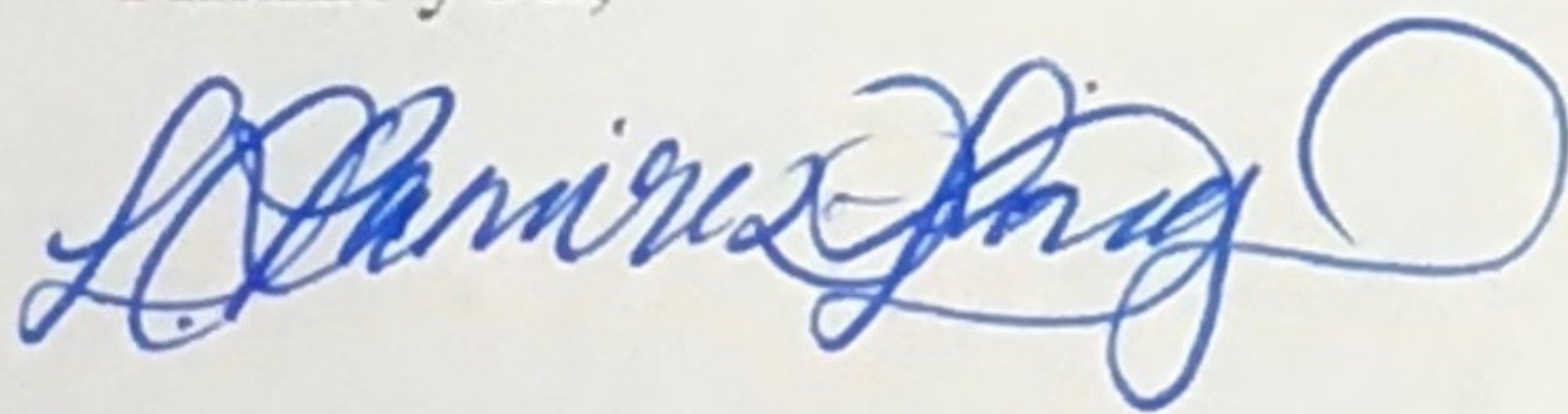
Parents and Grandparents spoke little about their involvement in fear of retribution, and simply because they did not want to relive the traumatic events and emotions of losing their loved ones. Not sure if you could imagine having to run from your home because your people were being hunted like animals and the only possibility of survival is to take your chances and run through the bullet-filled jungles to neighboring countries seeking asylum. For decades, the Hmong People who have suffered, who have perished, who have survived the war received little to no recognition. What was once the story many refuse to speak of has slowly surfaced as their children start to ask questions others have asked them, “What are you? Where are you from? Why are you here?”

What was the Secret War during the Vietnam War is no longer a secret. Yet, even the decedents of the Hmong people know very little of their own history. The "Hmong-American Veterans Day" would allow their story to be heard, to be a part of history, and to matter. Having this day dedicated to recognize the efforts of a group of people (the Hmong Veterans) should not be so difficult to do. This day would simply be a tribute to their sacrifices, their loss, and their efforts and for what they have endured during the Secret War.

The Secret War affected my parents and many others a great deal. My father led several Hmong soldiers during the Secret War, but not once was he publicly recognized for his service. This day would at least bring more light to their part of history, to recognize the Hmong Veterans for their sacrifices, their loss, and their efforts. This day would assure them that they are not forgotten and their efforts will forever be remembered. Let this day be their day that their stories may also be heard. So that when someone ask, what is "Hmong-American Veterans Day?" They can also tell their story.

So, when you question whether to support HB 56 and why dedicate a day for Hmong-American Veterans Day, for the reasons stated above and if that is still not enough to get your support, then I am wrong to assume that you are reasonable. While other stories have been heard, their stories have yet to be brought to light. By supporting May 15th as Hmong-American Veterans Day, it is the least we can do as a State and as a Community, to demonstrate our gratitude. Should you hold any reservations about supporting May 15th as Hmong-American Veterans Day, I'd like you to be mindful that others have days dedicated to their involvement, their participation and their causes, nevertheless all should be equally supported and all should have an opportunity to be recognized and heard. Therefore, your support to make May 15th Hmong-American Veterans Day would be greatly appreciated by the Hmong Community.

Thank you,



May Ramirez-Xiong

Resources:

Shay, Christopher (December 30, 2009). TIME - The Hmong and the CIA. Retrieved from

<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1950590,00.html>

U.S. History (n.d.). Ho Chi Minh Trail. Retrieved from <https://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1875.html>