

**STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE**

2025

Source
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**Legislative
Resolve No.**
4



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, although historical Chinese records do not provide extensive details on the origins of the name Hmong, many Hmong associate the name with meanings such as

"free" or "fate," reflecting the Hmong's enduring struggle against oppression and resilience throughout history; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS the United States Congress must pass legislation to approve each

Congressional Gold Medal, and, upon enactment, each Congressional Gold Medal is uniquely designed and cast in gold by the United States Mint, reflecting the singular nature of the honor and distinguishing it from other national awards; and

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

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

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

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

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