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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 1, 2014

Mr. Khao Insixiengmay
P.O. Box 43457
Brooklyn Park, MN 55443

Dear Mr. Insixiengmay,

Thank you for contacting me in regard to Lao and Hmong soldiers receiving recognition for their actions. Senator Murkowski has introduced a new version of her legislation, S. 2337, the Hmong Veterans' Service Recognition Act, which authorizes Hmong individuals to be interred in national cemeteries if they resided in the United States and were naturalized pursuant to the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000, or the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines they have other qualifying service.

The Department of Defense (DOD) Civilian/Military Service Review Board (C/MSRB) was established by Section 401 of Public Law 95-202. This board was authorized to evaluate situations such as this. The C/MSRB advises the DOD on matters related to whether civilian service in support of the United States Armed Forces during a period of armed conflict is equivalent to active military service for the purposes of certain VA benefits, including burial. To this point, the C/MSRB has not made a determination pertaining to the service of Hmong individuals during the Vietnam Conflict.

I appreciate greatly the sacrifice made by so many Hmong and Laotian soldiers during the Vietnam era. In order to move forward on this issue, I have supported report language that requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to report to Congress the extent to which Laotian forces provided combat support to the United States during the Vietnam era. Further, the report language requires an evaluation of the available documentation that may verify service. Similar language was included in the Committee Report to S. 944, Putting Our Veterans Back to Work Act of 2013, and was included in the Republican alternative to S. 1982, the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014.

Again, thank you for contacting me. I will continue to evaluate the previously introduced legislation, and look to advance report language to help Congress better evaluate this issue. Should you have any additional questions or comments, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,



Richard Burr
Ranking Member

RB/tz