



FROM THE OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN JIM COSTA

*Representing California's 16th District
Fresno County · Madera County · Merced County*

HMONG VETERANS' SERVICE RECOGNITION ACT

BACKGROUND

The San Joaquin Valley is home to hundreds of thousands of Hmong and Lao Americans who count among their elders and ancestors thousands of veterans of the Vietnam War.

During the Vietnam War, the CIA covertly trained Hmong men and women in Laos and led them into combat in support of U.S. Forces. These indigenous forces conducted direct missions against the Communist forces and their North Vietnamese supporters, saving countless American lives. More than 100,000 Hmong made the ultimate sacrifice.

After the war, thousands of Hmong and Lao families resettled in the San Joaquin Valley and around the United States to become legal permanent residents or U.S. citizens.

In 2000, President Clinton signed the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act, which enabled thousands of Hmong veterans and their families to become proud U.S. citizens. Six thousand Hmong veterans are still with us today.

HMONG VETERANS' SERVICE RECOGNITION ACT

Congressman Jim Costa (D-Calif.) and Vietnam War veteran Congressman Paul Cook (R-Calif.) are introducing legislation to allow the burial of Hmong veterans in national cemeteries, like the San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery in Merced County.

The legislation would only apply to Hmong veterans who are U.S. citizens and would not authorize full veterans' benefits.

MOMENTUM IN THE 113TH CONGRESS

Costa has long championed this legislation, which is seeing real momentum in the 113th Congress. In the House, powerful members of the Veterans Affairs Committee including Congressman Cook and Subcommittee Ranking Member Dina Titus (D-Nev.) have signed on as cosponsors. For the first time ever, companion legislation has been introduced in the Senate by Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska).