

Congressman Jim Costa (CA-16)

Veterans' Affairs Bipartisan Member Day Testimony

- I want to begin by thanking the Chairman and Ranking Member for allowing me to come before the Veterans' Affairs Committee to advocate on behalf of some of my constituents.
- 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, fighting shoulder to shoulder with U.S. soldiers, conducted direct missions against the Communist forces and their North Vietnamese supporters. Hmong soldiers saved countless American lives, and over the course of the war, more than 100,000 Hmong made the ultimate sacrifice.
- Since the end of the Vietnam War, thousands of Hmong and Lao families have resettled around the United States to become legal permanent residents or United States citizens and have greatly contributed to American society.

- From California to North Carolina and Minnesota to Rhode Island, these brave individuals and their families have made our country stronger and more prosperous.
- Of the Hmong who became U.S. citizens, approximately 5,000 veterans are still with us today, and they deserve the choice to be buried in national cemeteries.
- That is why I introduced the Special Guerrilla Unit Veterans Service Recognition Expansion Act.
- This legislation would authorize the interment in national cemeteries of ALL Hmong and Lao veterans who served in support of U.S. Forces in the Vietnam War. Given the dedicated service to our nation of these U.S. citizens, we believe this is an appropriate honor.
- I believe the Hmong deserve this honor, and through their service to the United States, they have earned it.
- Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, I encourage all my colleagues to support this legislation to honor the Hmong for their service.