

The Honorable Mark Takano  
41<sup>st</sup> District, California  
Judiciary Committee  
Member's Day Hearing

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Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Collins, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am here to discuss the deportation of noncitizen military veterans. Every day, these brave servicemen and women risk their lives in service to our country. Their sacrifice should be honored.

In June, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report at the request of my office and Congressman Juan Vargas to determine the scope of service member and veteran deportations. I was deeply alarmed by the findings in the report, which shed light on a systemic failure within the Department of

Homeland Security (DHS) to identify and track information on potentially removable veterans. I was equally troubled to discover that while Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) has certain policies in place to track these veterans, ICE routinely failed to adhere to those policies. This breakdown has directly resulted in the deportation of veterans whom have proudly served our nation.

These veterans have dutifully served us and as a country, we need to fix this grave injustice.

Congress has an important role to play in making sure all veterans have access to the benefits they rightfully earned and providing a clear path forward to citizenship for those who dream of becoming citizens. Regardless of where they were born, these veterans have taken an oath to fight and protect this

country, and they have proven themselves time after time. We must not waste another day – our veterans need help and they need it now.

Steps must be taken to ensure our veterans do not continue to fall through the cracks of a broken immigration system. I, along with some of my House colleagues, will be presenting a comprehensive package to address the significant and unique challenges our noncitizen veterans face. A comprehensive package would include several provisions to strike at the heart of some of the fundamental root causes of these deportations. It will be important for this chamber and this Committee to consider an approach that will take inventory of all veterans who have been deported from the U.S.; establish clear protocols to identify and track potential veterans who may be subjected to immigration proceedings and face the specter of deportation;

and establish a process to ensure that veterans moving through the judicial system stand a fair chance of being recognized for their service.

A common misconception about veterans is that they reliably self-identify and announce their veteran status while facing deportation proceedings, though we know that is simply not true. Under a fair and just system, the totality of a noncitizen veterans' service history would be presented before a judge during any deportation proceedings. However, this is rarely true today.

It is my view that no veteran = should be deported without a considerable review of their case and their service to our country. Those whom have already been forcibly removed should be given a fair chance to return to the country they love

as naturalized citizens. Our government is failing our noncitizens veterans and we must do better as a nation.

I urge this Committee to take seriously the issue of deported veterans and urge your utmost consideration once a comprehensive package is brought before this Committee.

Thank you and I yield back.