
U.S. Senate Slated To Vote On Laos, Hmong Veterans Burial Honors Bill, Reports CPPA

For Immediate Release

WASHINGTON, D.C./EWorldWire/Feb. 25, 2014 --- The U.S. Senate is pressing a major omnibus veterans bill forward today for potential consideration that contains legislation to assist Lao- and Hmong-American veterans of the Vietnam War in Laos who are seeking burial rights and honors at U.S. national veterans cemeteries.

"S. 1982, 'The Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act,' introduced by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders (I-VT), is scheduled for a cloture vote today by the Senate and potential debate on the bill. This comprehensive veterans' bill contains historic and important language adopted and rolled-in from earlier legislation regarding Lao- and Hmong-American veterans' burial and honors benefits, including S. 944 and S. 200," said Philip Smith, executive director of the Center for Public Policy Analysis (CPPA) in Washington, D.C.

"Unfortunately, many Lao- and Hmong-American veterans who served in America's covert theater of operations during the Vietnam War are dying across the United States without the benefit of being recognized or honored for their extraordinary military and clandestine service.

"Having saved the lives of many U.S. soldiers and aircrews, these forgotten veterans deserve to be buried with dignity at U.S. national veterans' cemeteries, with military honors, for their unique service as part of the 'U.S. Secret Army' defending U.S. national security interests and the Royal Kingdom of Laos, pivotal in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam conflict.

"The effort to further honor, and review, the Lao- and Hmong-American veterans' service, is being spearheaded by Chairman Bernie Sanders, Vice Chairman Richard Burr (R-NC), Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Mark Begich (D-AK), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Jack Reed (D-RI), and others.

"Congressmen Jim Costa (D-CA) and Paul Cook (R-CA), along with over 30 Members of Congress, have also introduced bipartisan legislation in the House regarding granting Lao- and Hmong-American veterans' burial honors at national cemeteries administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs," Smith concluded.

"We are strongly urging the U.S. Congress, as soon as possible, to pass and help implement crucial legislation to help those Lao- and Hmong veterans still surviving from the Vietnam War, along with their families in the United States," said Colonel Wangyee Vang, president of the Lao Veterans of America Institute (LVAI), headquartered in Fresno, Calif.

"The Lao- and Hmong Veterans Burial Honors Bill' was introduced in 2012, and again in early 2013, as S. 200, by Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

"We are very thankful that legislation is advancing in the U.S. Senate and Congress to seek to grant burial honors and benefits to our veterans at national veterans cemeteries administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs," Vang stated.

The CPPA, LVAI and Lao Veterans of America, Inc., provided testimony before the Senate Veterans Affairs' Committee in May and June of 2013, during Committee hearings and markup sessions on the plight of Lao and Hmong veterans and pending veterans' benefits legislation.

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CONTACT:

Jade Her

Center for Public Policy Analysis

2020 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20006
PHONE. 2025431444

Philip Smith
Center for Public Policy Analysis
2020 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20006
PHONE. 2025431444

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SOURCE: Center for Public Policy Analysis (CPPA)