

Veterans' Affairs Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-914

AN ACT CONCERNING HMONG LAOTIAN SPECIAL GUERILLA UNITS WHICH

Title: SERVED IN THE KINGDOM OF LAOS.

Vote Date: 3/18/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/23/2021

File No.: 249

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Veterans' Affairs Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill was proposed to allow members of the Hmong Laotian special guerilla units who served in the United States secret war, in the Kingdom of Laos during the Vietnam War, or their surviving spouse, to receive the designation of "Veteran" on driver's licenses, state identification cards and license plates, as well as burial benefits. The Department of Veterans Affairs would confirm their qualification for these benefits. This bill is a way to honor the service of members of these special guerilla units and their sacrifice alongside American Service members in Vietnam and Laos.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Thomas Saadi, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Affairs.](#): Commissioner Saadi testified and submitted written testimony in support of SB-914. He stated he hoped that Connecticut would continue to show leadership by providing eligible Hmong and Laotian special guerilla unit veterans with the recognition afforded other U.S. combat allies. This bill extends a level of support and recognition to the Hmong Laotian Veterans who fought alongside our US Vietnam Veterans. Commissioner Saadi recognized the "people like Connecticut's own General Fatoosak and his fellow Special Guerilla Unit (SGU) Veterans, U.S. Vietnam Veterans and Veteran Service Organizations across our State and Nation have been advocating for years for the proper recognition of the service of the SGU."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Robert Havens, Veteran](#) : Mr. Havens submitted written testimony in support of SB-914 describing his personal experience working with intelligence alongside the Hmong Laotian fighters. The camaraderie that developed did not necessarily remove the fear and anxiety from the mission, but it made the operation less frightening. He stated, " I know of cases where special guerilla units lost their own personnel to bring an already dead pilot or flight crew member out of Laos so the United States would not have to explain why they were there." He concluded by stating that we owe these people so much for what they have done and what they continue to do as loyal United States Citizens.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed.

Reported by: Edward Jacome, Assistant Clerk Date: 03/26/21