

Washington, D.C. (May 26, 2011) – U.S. Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Richard Burr (D-NC), co-chairs of the Senate Military Family Caucus, along with Representatives Linda Sanchez (D-CA) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, today joined with Senate and House colleagues of both parties to send a letter to President Obama requesting that he designate March 29 as "National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day."

This proclamation would honor Vietnam veterans each year on the date the last American combat forces withdrew from Vietnam, according to the terms of the Treaty of Paris.

Congressman Bilirakis said, "These courageous Americans have defined the meaning of patriotism and heroism. They embody the American spirit that has forged a better future for our nation's children and grandchildren. We must never forget the dedication and sacrifice these men and women gave in order to preserve the freedom that we enjoy."

Senator Boxer said, "Each and every American service member who sacrifices for our country deserves to be welcomed home by a grateful nation. Establishing a national day of recognition for veterans of the Vietnam War will honor their service and show the deep gratitude our nation feels for these brave men and women."

Senator Burr said, "American servicemembers in Vietnam fought valiantly to protect a democratic way of life for all of those who seek it. While we cannot ever entirely right the wrong done to these men and women when they returned home to a country in turmoil, we must make every effort to demonstrate our support and gratitude towards those who sacrificed so much on our behalf."

Congresswoman Sanchez said, "We owe it to the brave men and women who honorably served our country to honor them for their sacrifice. Unfortunately, many Vietnam veterans came home to harsh ridicule and criticism, instead of the warm embrace and the proper homecoming they deserved. As someone who has introduced 'Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day' legislation each Congress since I came to Washington, I hope that President Obama fixes this injustice and gives these veterans long overdue recognition by establishing an annual 'National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.'"

In their letter, the Senators and Representatives point out that due to contentious public debate on U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, returning veterans were denied appropriate

recognition for their service. They wrote, "A Presidential proclamation would officially designate a 'National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day' and ensure that all Americans remember and honor the service of these brave men and women."

In recent years, both the Senate and House of Representatives have unanimously passed resolutions expressing support for the designation of a "National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day." A Presidential proclamation declaring this a national day of observance would formalize this fitting tribute to these brave and honorable men and women.

In addition to Boxer, Burr, Sanchez and Bilirakis, the letter is signed by Senators Max Baucus (D-MT), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Kent Conrad (D-ND), James M. Inhofe (R-OK), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Ben Nelson (D-NE), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Bernard Sanders (I-VT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Mark Udall (D-CO), Mike Johanns (R-NE), Mark Begich (D-AK), Scott P. Brown (R-MA), Joe Manchin III (D-WV), John Boozman (R-AR) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Representatives Michael Grimm (R-NY), Betty Sutton (D-OH), Frederica Wilson (D-FL), John Larson (D-CT), Yvette Clarke (D-NY), Silvestre Reyes (D-TX), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Joe Donnelly (D-IN), Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Mark Critz (D-PA), Leonard Boswell (D-IA), Robert Brady (D-PA), Gwen Moore (D-WI), Tim Bishop (D-NY), Shelley Berkley (D-NV), Jay Inslee (D-WA), Bob Filner (D-CA), Nita Lowey (D-NY), Joe Courtney (D-CT), Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), Ed Perlmutter (D-CO), Joe Crowley (D-NY), John Yarmuth (D-KY), Michael Capuano (D-MA), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Bill Pascrell (D-NJ), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Chaka Fattah (D-PA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Charlie Gonzalez (D-TX), Brian Higgins (D-NY), Lloyd Doggett (D-TX), Bill Owens (D-NY), Mike Thompson (D-CA), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Peter Welch (D-VT), Tim Ryan (D-OH) and Mike Michaud (D-ME).

The full text of the letter is below:

May 26, 2011

The President
The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Memorial Day approaches, we respectfully request that you designate March 29 as "National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" to honor members of the United States Armed Forces who served during the Vietnam War. We believe a designation at this time would be a fitting tribute to all who served during the Vietnam War, including the more than 58,000 Americans who gave their lives in service to our country.

We appreciate your commitment to our veterans and your tireless work to ensure that our newest veterans receive the recognition, benefits and care they deserve from a grateful nation. But we must also remember the men and women who bravely and faithfully served during the Vietnam War. Upon their return home, Vietnam veterans were caught in the crossfire of public debate about our country's involvement in the conflict. As a result, they were denied appropriate recognition and honor for their service.

Over the past four years, Congress has worked to right this wrong and provide a proper homecoming for our Vietnam veterans. Beginning in 2007, bipartisan resolutions have passed unanimously in the House of Representatives and the Senate expressing support for the designation of a "National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day." A Presidential proclamation would officially designate a "National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" and ensure that all Americans remember and honor the service of these brave men and women. We believe that March 29 would be an appropriate date for this observance because it marks the date that the United States completed the withdrawal of all combat troops from Vietnam.

Vietnam veterans and their families deserve our gratitude for their countless sacrifices. In the words of President John F. Kennedy, "A nation reveals itself not only by the citizens it produces, but also by the citizens it honors, the citizens it remembers." Designating March 29 as an annual "National Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" would be an important step toward recognizing our Vietnam veterans as the heroes they are and giving them a long overdue welcome home.

Thank you for your attention to this important request. We look forward to your prompt reply.