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**AJR-7 State veterans cemeteries: Hmong veterans.** (2021-2022)

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**Assembly Joint Resolution No. 7**

**CHAPTER 117**

Relative to Hmong veterans.

[ Filed with Secretary of State September 07, 2021. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AJR 7, Patterson. State veterans cemeteries: Hmong veterans.

This measure would urge the United States Congress and the President of the United States to permit states to extend burial and memorial benefits to Hmong veterans at state veterans cemeteries.

Fiscal Committee: yes

WHEREAS, During the Vietnam War, the Special Guerrilla Units in Laos were directed by the Central Intelligence Agency to disrupt North Vietnamese supply lines, fight in guerrilla combat against immense resistance, rescue downed American pilots, and prevent the Laotian government from falling to the Communist Pathet Lao; and

WHEREAS, Between 30,000 and 40,000 Hmong soldiers were killed by the end of the war and anywhere between one-tenth to one-half of the Hmong population was killed as a result of military engagements, massacres, and disease; and

WHEREAS, As a result of a mass exodus that continues to this day, almost 100,000 Hmong individuals currently reside in California, making our state home to the largest population of Hmong in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The federal Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000 granted special considerations to Hmong and Laotian refugees who served in American-backed guerrilla units during the Vietnam War and enabled thousands of veterans to receive United States citizenship; and

WHEREAS, Even though Hmong veterans were highly esteemed for their support of the United States, having been credited for saving the lives of tens of thousands of American soldiers, these veterans were not previously entitled to veterans burial and memorial benefits in any national or state veterans cemetery, despite having operated under a civilian foreign intelligence service of the federal government of the United States; and

WHEREAS, After nearly 20 years of bipartisan efforts, the federal government extended veterans burial benefits in national veterans cemeteries through a provision included in the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018; and

WHEREAS, While Hmong and Laotian veterans may now be buried in any open national veterans cemetery, with the exception of Arlington National Cemetery, states are still unable to permit Hmong veterans to be buried in any open state veterans cemetery without the risk of losing funding from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Cemetery Grants Program; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature respectfully urges the United States Congress and the President of the United States to permit states to extend the same burial and memorial benefits to Hmong veterans in state veterans cemeteries that the federal government allows in national veterans cemeteries; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature stands in solidarity with Hmong veterans; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Majority Leader of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, to each Senator and Representative from California in the United States Congress, and to the author for appropriate distribution.