

SB21-XXXX

"WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY"

Bill Sponsors: Senator Jaquez Lewis, Rep. Sullivan



ESTABLISHING A "WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY" IN COLORADO



More than 2.7 million Americans served in the Vietnam War and more than 9 million were on active duty from 1964–1975. An estimated 58,000 lost their lives during combat [1], including 623 Coloradans [2], and more than 300,000 were wounded. Throughout the war, more than 2,500 soldiers were listed as prisoners of war or missing in action, 41 of whom were Coloradans, and 24 who still remain unaccounted for [3]. Despite their tremendous sacrifices, the Vietnam War was the first war in which veterans were not welcomed home, and most never received any recognition for their service [4]. This bill would establish March 30th as an annual "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans" Day in Colorado, in effort to honor and thank veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice. **Note: This legislation does not create a state legal holiday that would be a paid day off for state employees.**

WHY VIETNAM VETERANS?

- Unlike veterans of other wars, Vietnam veterans were not welcomed home in the US, and most never received any appreciation or recognition of their service [5]
- Due to controversy and opposition to the war, Vietnam vets faced protests, hostility and mistreatment upon returning to the US [6]
- Vietnam Veterans did not receive the same degree of financial benefits as veterans of other wars, including assistance for housing and education [7]
- Vietnam veterans, especially those with service-related disabilities, have higher rates of unemployment, poverty and homelessness than the general population and WWII [8]
- At least 47% of the homeless veteran population in the US are Vietnam vets [9]
- Most veterans of the Vietnam War were exposed to violent combat and/or life threatening experiences, including Agent Orange
- An estimated 30% of all Vietnam Veterans have experienced PTSD in their lifetime [10], and are twice likely as as other veterans to have heightened depression and anxiety [11]
- Due to stigma, lack of funds and mismanagement of veteran benefits, Vietnam veterans face unique barriers to accessing critical healthcare, including mental health treatment

WHAT WOULD THIS BILL DO?

- Establish March 30th as an annual "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day" in Colorado
- Thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including prisoners of war, those listed as missing in action, and those whose lives were lost, for their service on behalf of the United States and thanks and honors the families of these veterans
- Allows for observance by the public and in all public schools in tribute to the service and sacrifice of Vietnam Veterans
- Increases awareness of the unique challenges facing Vietnam Veterans in both the US and Colorado

LET'S BE 39th

Thirty eight US states already recognize March 29th or 30th as annual Vietnam Veterans Day, and 46, including Puerto Rico, recognize it either annually or for a specific year.

*To support this legislation, please contact:
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- [1] <https://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history>
- [2] <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-lists/co-alpha.pdf>
- [3] Ibid.
- [4] <https://www.va.gov/OAA/pocketcard/m-vietnam>
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/65973/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-While%20veterans%20of%20World%20War%20II%20prospered%20Vietnam%20veterans%20suffered%20economical%20ly%20after%20coming%20home%5B1%5D.pdf>
- [8] Ibid.
- [9] <https://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/veterans.html>
- [10] https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/common/common_veterans.asp
- [11] <https://www.research.va.gov/topics/vietnam.cfm#research2>