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House of Representatives

HONOR OUR WOUNDED AND FALLEN HEROES!

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I rise today to urge support of my legislation that recognizes and honors the service and sacrifice of members of the United States Armed Forces.

The first bill is H.R. 2369, "Honor our Fallen Prisoners of War Act". Currently, prisoners of war who die during their imprisonment of wounds inflicted in war are eligible for posthumous Purple Heart recognition. However, those who die of starvation, beatings, freezing or other causes are not eligible for the Purple Heart!

This is not right! There should be no false distinction indicating more courage or more sacrifice by some who died and less by others. All POWs who died in service to our Nation should be eligible for Purple Heart recognition. H.R. 2369 will allow all members of our Armed Forces who die while a Prisoner of War, regardless of the cause of death, to be awarded the Purple Heart posthumously. This will apply to all wars, past and present.

I am indebted to Rick and Brenda

Morgan Tavares of Campo, California and to Wilbert "Shorty" Estabrook of Murrieta, California who brought this issue to my attention. Shorty survived the Tiger Camp death march during the Korean War and was imprisoned for over three years. Brenda's uncle, Corporal Melvin Morgan, died of starvation and beatings in 1950 at the age of 20 in Korea.

Today, I am also introducing H.R. 2370, the "In Memory Medal for Forgotten Veterans Act". There are two groups of veterans who I believe need recognition beyond what they are currently receiving. The first are veterans who have died as a result of their service in the Vietnam War but who do not meet the criteria for inclusion on The Wall of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund has a program called "In Memory" which has raised money for a plaque that has been placed near The Wall. The plaque honors "those who served in the Vietnam War and later died as a result of their service." No names are on the plaque, but all names are kept in a "In Memory Book" at a kiosk near The Wall, and families can

order a copy.

My bill adds to this fine recognition by presenting the families of these veterans with a medal, to be known as the "Jesus Chuchi Salgado Medal" to be issued by the Secretary of Defense. Chuchi Salgado was an outstanding individual, living in my Congressional district, whose exposure to Agent Orange ultimately led to his death. I would like to recognize his wife, Carla Salgado, as well as Dan Santillan, who live in my Congressional District in California. Dan suggested the appropriateness of this bill.

The second group of veterans deserving

of the "Jesus Chuchi Salgado" medal are those who were exposed to chemical agents, ionizing radiation, or chemical and herbicide agents during their service in the Armed Forces. The medal would be presented to veterans who are still living or to their families if they have died. Thomas Barnes of Whittier, California requested that action be taken to commemorate and honor such veterans.

I urge my colleagues to join with me in co-sponsoring and passing H.R. 2369 and H.R. 2370. It is critical that we honor and remember those who have fought so gallantly for our freedom!