

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

November 11, 2005

**This Veteran's Day, Help Ensure that Latino Winners of the  
Congressional Medal of Honor are Also Remembered**

**Cosponsor H.R. 2134**

Dear Colleague:

The Congressional Medal of Honor is the highest U.S. military distinction a soldier can receive, awarded to our heroes in uniform since the Civil War for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty." Forty-one men of Latino origin have earned it, including 21 who sacrificed their lives in the very act for which they earned this cherished honor. In fact, Latino veterans are proportionally overrepresented among the 3,461 Congressional Medal of Honor winners.

These 41 men serve as an inspiration for the 40 million Latinos and other Americans across the nation. Their dedication and sacrifice are a testament to the contribution Latinos have made to this country since our founding. A few examples...

*Conspicuous gallantry* – Army Specialist 4<sup>th</sup> Class John Baca, born in Providence, Rhode Island, served in Vietnam. Baca threw himself on his helmet to cover an enemy grenade saving eight of his fellow soldiers from certain death. Miraculously, he survived the full force of the explosion. Now a California resident, Baca returned to Vietnam for eight weeks in 1990 to help build a health clinic.

*...and intrepidity at the risk of life* – Marine Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Edward Gomez, from Omaha, Nebraska, served in the Korean War. Gomez received the Congressional Medal of Honor for sacrificing his life to protect his comrades from an incoming enemy grenade, by picking it up and diving into a ditch, fully absorbing the brunt of the explosion. He gallantly gave his life for his country and for his fellow Marines.

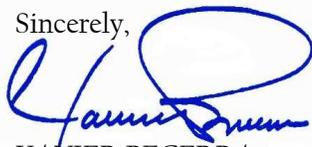
*...above and beyond the call of duty.* – The son of Mexican immigrants, Army Sergeant Jose Lopez, of Mission, Texas, served in World War II where he fought in Belgium in 1944 and saved an entire company from being overtaken by Nazis. Under heavy artillery fire, Lopez alone mobilized and manned a heavy machine gun, single-handedly killing at least 100 of the enemy, becoming a one man defense line in a badly outnumbered company. His efforts allowed other forces coming up in support time to build a line which repelled the enemy drive.

These medal winners illustrate a proud tradition of Latinos in military service. Still, this portrait of Latinos as American heroes and patriots is not always well represented in the premier museums and historical institutions located in our nation's capital. Scarcely any of the permanent exhibitions in the Washington D.C. are representative of the Latino experience and contributions to American life.

For this reason, I have introduced legislation to create an expert commission to study whether and how to establish a national museum dedicated to American Latino contributions to the history, culture, and art of our country. For the one million Latino veterans who have served in the military, and the 40 million Latinos in the United States, a more complete telling of the American story is warranted.

To cosponsor H.R. 2134, the bipartisan National Museum of the American Latino Community Commission Act, and join more than 95 of your colleagues, please contact Joel Najar (Rep. Becerra) at 6-3748.

Sincerely,



XAVIER BECERRA  
Member of Congress