

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 20, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We write to urge your consideration of the late Colonel Young Oak Kim for the 2016 Presidential Medal of Freedom. As Members of Congress who represent a diverse America, we believe that Colonel Kim deserves this high honor for his exemplary patriotism and heroism in the United States military and his leadership in underserved communities. He fought for peace abroad, and he fought for peace at home, dedicating his life to public service. He exemplifies the character that the Presidential Medal of Freedom seeks to uplift.

Throughout his distinguished military career, Colonel Kim fought for this country abroad while also fighting racial discrimination at home. Not only did he break through enemy lines, he broke barriers for Asian Americans during a time of intense anti-Asian sentiment. As the first person of color to command an army battalion, Colonel Kim demonstrated that our bravery and our patriotism are not defined by the color of our skin. He also bridged the divide between Asian Americans when he refused to be reassigned from the 100th Battalion on the assumption that Korean Americans and Japanese Americans could not get along. He told his commanding officer: "You're wrong. They're Americans, I'm American, and we're going to fight for America."


In recognition of his valiant military service, Colonel Kim received the U.S. Distinguished Service Cross for undertaking a "suicide mission" in the 1944 Battle of Anzio during the liberation of Rome. He also earned two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars, two Legions of Merit, and three Purple Hearts.

After his retirement from military service in 1972, he spent the rest of his life advocating for traditionally underserved communities in Los Angeles, regardless of their ethnic background. He also helped to develop several charitable, educational, and social non-profit organizations in Southern California, including the Korean American Museum; the Korean American Coalition; and the Korean Health, Education, Information and Research Center. In the 1990s, he served as chairman of the Center for Asian Pacific Families, which became the largest women's shelter in Southern California under his leadership. He also continued to honor the contributions of the Japanese Americans with whom he served during World War II and helped to establish the Japanese American National Museum, the Go For Broke Memorial, and the Go For Broke Educational Fund.

Colonel Kim's legacy continues to live on through the lives he touched and the humanitarian work of his organizations. If selected for the Presidential Medal of Freedom, he would be the first Korean American to receive this high honor. We salute Colonel Young Oak Kim for his many contributions to our country and encourage you to recognize this unsung hero whose legacy deserves to be cemented in our nation's history. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515


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Member of Congress
CAPAC Chair


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Member of Congress


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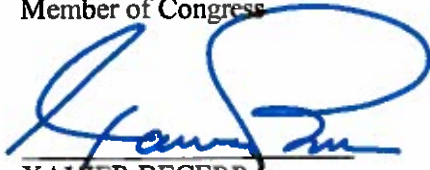

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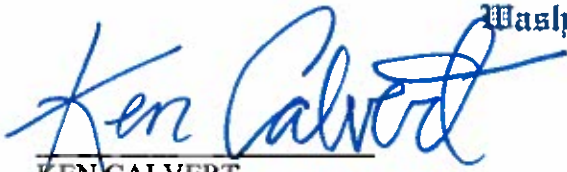

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Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515



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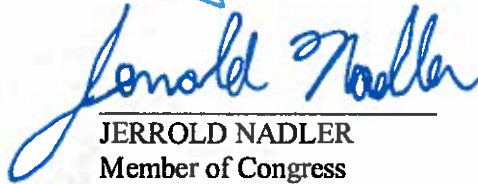
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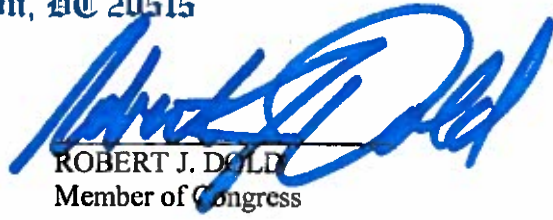


LINDA SANCHEZ
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515



ROSA DELAURO
Member of Congress



ROBERT J. DOLD
Member of Congress