

WISCONSIN STATE
LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE
HEARING RECORDS

1997-98

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on
Veterans and
Military Affairs
(AC-VMA)

Sample:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01a
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01b
- 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt02

➤ Appointments ... Appt

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➤ Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

➤ **

➤ Committee Hearings ... CH

➤ **

➤ Committee Reports ... CR

➤ **

➤ Executive Sessions ... ES

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➤ Hearing Records ... HR

➤ **

➤ Miscellaneous ... Misc

➤ **97hr_AC-VMA_Misc_pt04**

➤ Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

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State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development

*Rep Musser,
Attached is
the proposal
from the Hmong
meeting
on Saturday*

SUSAN G. LEVY

Director, Refugee Services
Division of Economic Support

*Rep. Welch
attended
& spoke.
Sue*

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Lao Human Rights Council, Inc.

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Seven-Point Proposal on the Restoration of SSI and Other Benefits to Hmong and Lao Veterans, Disabled People, and Legal Permanent Residents and Refugees

Submitted to: → The Honorable Terry Musser
State Representative
State Capitol Hill
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Submitted by: Dr. Vang Pobzeb
Chairman of Lao-Hmong Justice Commission
and Members of the Commission

Date of Submission: March 15, 1997



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March 15, 1997

The Honorable Terry Musser
State Representative
State Capitol Hill
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Dear Representative Musser:

On behalf of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission and parties concerned in Wisconsin, we sincerely and respectfully request that you take action to waive and exempt Hmong and Lao veterans, disabled people, elderly people, widows and legal permanent residents and refugees from the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit cuts and other necessary benefits and assistance being made against those who are not American citizens yet. During the Cold War in Southeast Asia, the U.S. government recruited, trained and used them to fight against communist aggression and the communist threat in Indochina, in order to protect the peace and security of the United States in Europe and around the world. Therefore, the legacy of the war created the major factor that caused many thousands of Hmong and Lao people to become disabled, mentally ill or acquire other health problems. Over 40,000 people died in the war. Many thousands of women were therefore widowed, and there are orphaned children and other family members who, though they survived, are suffering depression or have symptoms of mental stress in Wisconsin and elsewhere in the United States. These people desire your help, assistance, care, concern and protection.

Enclosed is a Seven-Point Proposal on the Restoration of SSI and other benefits for Hmong and Lao veterans, disabled people and legal permanent residents. This proposal was drafted by members of the Lao Hmong Justice Commission and was approved by key participants of the public conference and hearings in Madison, Wisconsin on March 15, 1997.

Thank you so much in advance for your help, assistance and support to the Hmong and Lao American people who are legal permanent residents and legal refugees.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vang Pobzeb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Vang Pobzeb
Chairman
Lao-Hmong Justice Commission

Enclosure

Purpose of Lao-Hmong Justice Commission

On November 2, 1996, more than 500 Hmong and Lao Americans, community leaders, actors and individuals met at North High School, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The participants established the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission — a task force commission. The purpose of this commission is to study the problems of welfare and immigration reforms, poverty and other related concerns to Hmong and Lao American people and refugees in Wisconsin. The main concerns are the cut-off of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and other essential benefits to veterans, disabled people, elderly people, and legal permanent residents and refugees in Wisconsin.

Participants elected Dr. Vang Pobzeb, Executive Director of the Lao Human Rights Council, Inc., to serve as the Chairman of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission until the missions of the commission have been accomplished.

The purposes and objectives of the commission are:

(1) To study the problems and questions of welfare and immigration reforms, SSI and citizenship requirements which affect Hmong and Lao legal permanent residents and veterans and disabled people.

(2) To report on these problems to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government for consideration, help, support and humanitarian assistance, civil rights and human rights.

(3) To make recommendations to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government for action plans in solving these problems and other related issues concerning Hmong and Lao American communities.

Members of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission

Chairmen

1. Dr. Vang Pobzeb, Chairman
2. Mr. Pang Bliang Vang, Co-Chairman
3. Mr. Cher Pao Lee, Co-Chairman
4. Mr. Joe Bee Xiong, Co-Chairman
5. Mr. Vaughn Vang, Co-Chairman

Advisory Committee Members

6. Wang Neng Hang, Menomonie, Wisconsin
7. Cher Yeng Khang, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin
8. Chai Houa Lee, Menasha, Wisconsin
9. Nao Ying Lee, Two Rivers, Wisconsin
10. Xay Fong Lor, Oshkosh, Wisconsin
11. Nao Shoua Thao, Appleton, Wisconsin
12. Chia Chai Vang, Fond du Luc, Wisconsin
13. Lao Thai Vang, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
14. Wang Seng Vang, Waunakee, Wisconsin
15. Vang Xiong, LaCrosse, Wisconsin
16. Chue Lao Yang, Wausau, Wisconsin
17. Ka Yee Vang, Wausau, Wisconsin
18. Wang Xeng Xiong, Wausau, Wisconsin
19. Chai Kou Yang, Menomonie, Wisconsin
20. Xay Va Vang, Appleton, Wisconsin
21. Wang Meng Yang, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin
22. Lao Xiong, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin
23. Nhoua Xiong, Green Bay, Wisconsin
24. Stevens P. Yang, Green Bay, Wisconsin
25. Pao Vang, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
26. Khoua Vang, Superior, Wisconsin
27. Pheng Vang, Green Bay, Wisconsin
28. Vang Shoua, Port Edwards, Wisconsin
29. Nao Yeng Thao, Madison, Wisconsin
30. Nao Pao Vang, Stevens Point, Wisconsin
31. Moua Kao, Sheboygan, Wisconsin
32. Wang Chou Yang, Eau Claire, Wisconsin
33. Xay Dang Xiong, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
34. Tou Lia Lee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
35. Khoua Mai Moua, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
36. Nao Cha Xiong, Eau Claire, Wisconsin
37. Christlong Lor, Menomonie, Wisconsin
38. Thao Moua, Menomonie, Wisconsin

39. Pa Lee Thao, Sheboygan, Wisconsin
40. Ms. Chia Yang, Neenah, Wisconsin
41. Thai Lee, Appleton, Wisconsin
42. Stevens P. Vang, Menomonie, Wisconsin
43. Yong Chue Khang, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin
44. Lang Vang, Green Bay, Wisconsin
45. Pang Cha Lor, Green Bay, Wisconsin
46. Mrs. Xong Moua, Green Bay, Wisconsin
47. Moua Xiong, Green Bay, Wisconsin



**Conference on Immigration and welfare Reform
Dane County Expo Center, Madison, Wisconsin
March 15, 1997**

Tentative Schedule and Agenda

- 10:00 A.M. Open door and registration
- 11:00 A.M. Open the conference and welcome speech by
Attorney Koua Vang (J.D.), Chairman of the Conference
- 11:15 A.M. - 2:00 P.M. Speech by Col. Ly Tou Pao, Representative and Chief
of Staff of General Vang Pao
- Linda Stewart, Representative from the office of Governor
Tommy Thompson, Governor of Wisconsin
- Dr. Vang Pobzeb, Chairman, Lao-Hmong Justice Commission,
submits Action Plans and Recommendations to State and Federal
Government
- State Senator Robert Welch
- Mr. Pang Bliia Vang, President of Lao Veterans of America,
Inc., Wisconsin Chapter
- Testimonies and public hearings on the floor
- Dr. Richard Leventhal, Clinic Director, Dunn County, Department
of Human Services, Menomonie, Wisconsin and other witnesses
- State Representative Terry Musser was invited.
- State Representative Antonion Riley
- Col. Wang Yee Vang, President of Lao Veterans of
America, Inc., California Office
- Other State Representatives and Senators and members of
U.S Congress were invited
- Conclusion by Chairman of the conference and other planning
committee members
- Interpreters and MC: Mr. Stevens P. Vang
Mr. Joe Bee Xiong
Mr. Vaughn Vang



**Chairmen and Planning Committee Members of
the Conference in Madison, Wisconsin on March 15, 1997**

Mr. Vang Koua, Chairman and Attorney at Law, Madison, Wisconsin

Dr. Vang Pobzeb, Co-Chairman and Executive Director, Lao Human Rights Council, Inc., Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Mr. Pang Bliang Vang, Co-Chairman and President of Lao Veterans of America, Inc., Wisconsin Chapter, Menomonie, Wisconsin

Mr. Cher Pao Lee, Co-Chairman and Vice President of Lao Veterans of America, Inc., Wisconsin Chapter, Appleton, Wisconsin

Mr. Joe Bee Xiong, Co-Chairman, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Mr. Vaughn Vang, Co-Chairman and President of Lao Human Rights Council, Inc., Green Bay, Wisconsin

Mr. Pang Lee Thao, Co-Chairman and Vice President of Lao Human Rights Council, Inc., Sheboygan, Wisconsin

And twelve members of the Board of Directors and 21 Chapters of the Lao Veterans of America, Inc. throughout Wisconsin; senior citizens, disabled individuals, veterans and SSI recipients throughout Wisconsin.

There are many people who have assisted and supported this conference and the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission. Their names are not on the above list. We all appreciate and thank them for their cooperation, assistance and support.

Sponsored by:

Lao Veterans of America, Inc., Wisconsin Chapter, Lao Hmong Justice Commission — Task Force Commission on Welfare and Immigration Reforms, the Lao Human Rights Council, Inc., senior citizens, disabled and handicapped individuals, and veterans.

Contact:

Dr. Vang Pobzeb at (715) 831-8355,
Pang Bliang Vang at (715) 232-9009,
and Koua Vang at (608) 273-1733.

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Background Information

The era of 1863 to 1954 was the PERIOD OF THE FRENCH INDOCHINA EMPIRE. Between 1893 and 1954, the French government controlled Laos. During this period, Hmong and Lao people served in the French Army fighting against the communist threat of expansion in Indochina. After the GENEVA CONFERENCE ON INDOCHINA OF 1954, the French withdrew from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. From 1955 to 1975 was the PERIOD OF THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR, or the Vietnam War. The U.S. government recruited Hmong and Lao people to fight this war. The purpose of U.S. foreign policy toward Indochina was to defend and protect peace, freedom, democracy, and independence for Indochina, Thailand and Southeast Asia, and to protect the national security interests of the United States and the rest of the free world from the communist threat and expansion.

From the administrations of President Dwight Eisenhower to President John Kennedy, Americans made a promise to Hmong and Lao people if they would cooperate with the U.S. government to fight the Vietnam War. The promise was that if the U.S. government lost the war and the communists took over Laos, the U.S. government would find land for Hmong and Lao people to live on. The U.S. government and the American people promised they would take good care of Hmong and Lao people. Americans requested General Vang Pao, his advisers and assistants to recruit Hmong and Lao people to fight the Vietnam War. People between 10 years old and 60 years old were recruited by Americans to fight this war for 20 years. Hmong and Lao people respected and honored the American government and the American people. We called them "sirs." Hmong and Lao soldiers and individuals rescued many American soldiers and pilots who were shot down and captured by the communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese soldiers. More than 40,000 Hmong soldiers died in the Vietnam War and the "secret war" in Laos. Many thousands were wounded. They became handicapped, or disabled people.

In 1975, in accordance with the PARIS PEACE AGREEMENT ON INDOCHINA OF JANUARY 27, 1973, the United States withdrew its troops and advisers from Laos, South Vietnam and Cambodia. The North Vietnamese government, however, took over South Vietnam by invasion with armed forces. The Khmer Rouge regime took over Cambodia. Then the communist Pathet Lao movement, financed and supported by the North Vietnamese and Russian governments, took over Laos by invasion with armed forces and formed the LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC. These actions were a violation of the PARIS PEACE AGREEMENT ON INDOCHINA and the VIENTIANE PEACE AGREEMENT ON LAOS OF 1973.

Since 1975, the COMMUNIST PATHET LAO GOVERNMENT has killed over 300,000 people in Laos. The victims include the Royal Lao family, approximately 46,000 former government officials, civil servants, military personnel, ranking military generals, and their associates and family members. The "KILLING FIELDS" of Laos, the chemical bombings, gross human rights violations, tortures, and genocidal murders, massacres and executions created the Laotian refugee crisis, the creation of refugee camps in Thailand, and the spread of Laotian and Hmong refugees around the world.

The "killing fields" and genocide against Hmong people of Laos is still going on today. Since 1976, the communist Lao government has used "chemical weapons" to bomb and kill many thousands of Hmong people and Lao people, including civilian men, women and children.

Many thousands of refugees in the camps in Thailand have been forced back to communist Laos. Over 5,000 returnees have been killed by the Lao government since 1991. The communist authorities arrested Mr. Vue Mai, a leader of Hmong returnees in Laos, on September 11, 1993, and many hundreds of returnees and thousands of innocent citizens have been arrested and are imprisoned in Laos today.

Data on Hmong and Lao Population in Wisconsin

There are about 40,000 Hmong and Lao legal residents and refugees in Wisconsin in 1997. There are a total of 263,000 Hmong and Lao Americans and legal permanent residents in the United States.

Productive Citizens and Taxpayers

Most Hmong and Lao American people are hardworking and productive citizens. They have been paying taxes to the state governments and the federal government. They are good citizens in this country. There are over 5,000 Hmong and Lao American students in undergraduate schools in colleges and universities in the United States in 1997. In the past decade, sixty-five Hmong persons received PhDs, became medical doctors, obtained law degrees or received other professional degrees in American universities in the United States. In the year 2000, there will be over 6,000 Hmong and Lao American students in colleges and universities in the United States. During the past decade, over 1,500 students received bachelor degrees from colleges and universities in this country. More than 200 persons received masters degrees or other professional degrees. This is major progress in the economic and educational development of Hmong and Lao Americans in Wisconsin and other states in this country.

The Impacts of Cut-Off of SSI

The cut-off of SSI benefits, food stamps, and other basic human needs to Hmong and Lao elderly, handicapped or disabled people, senior citizens and legal residents of Wisconsin and other states is creating a situation of economic disaster and threat to them. The cut is a cut of hopes, expectations and justice, civil rights and human rights and equal protection to them. The cut might create major factors for many people to commit suicide because of the cut of basic human needs. The *Leader-Telegram* of Eau Claire, Wisconsin reported that a Hmong veteran, Tou Vang, of Menomonie, Wisconsin said that, "if the government cuts me off I will have no place to live. I will have no food to eat. I will commit suicide. I was working for the CIA for more than 15 years. Now, I am crippled. I have no country. When I was a young man, the U.S. government needed me to help to defend the government of the United States. But when they (U.S. government) lost the war, they left me behind without taking my family. Why (does) the government do something like that to me? I am very angry. Many (members) of my family have been murdered by the communists" in Laos (*Leader-Telegram*, March 1, 1997).

Consequently, there are many thousands of cases similar to the case of Tou Vang of Menomonie, Wisconsin.

Data of SSI Recipients

It is estimated that about 5,000 - 10,000 Hmong and Lao legal residents of Wisconsin are currently Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients. About 40,000 Hmong and Lao legal residents of 263,000 people in the United States are SSI recipients.

Factors Causing Dependency on SSI

The legacies of the "secret war" in Laos, the Vietnam War and chemical bombings in Laos in the post-Vietnam War created factors resulting in many thousands of Hmong and Lao veterans and civilian men, women and children to become mentally ill, have poor mental health, become sick or handicapped/disabled. One of the legacies was that people's minds were damaged, and they lost the ability to learn the English language and job skills in the United States. In addition to this, more than 40,000 Hmong soldiers died in the war, and so there are now many thousands of widows in Wisconsin and in other states in this country. They desire to receive fair treatment and equal protection, humanitarian assistance and financial support from the state and federal governments, because the U.S. government recruited, trained and used their husbands to fight the war in Southeast Asia in order to protect the security and peace of the United States. Therefore, many thousands of handicapped people, elderly people, veterans and their family members and associates have been depending on SSI benefits and other necessary assistance from the state government and federal government. They are unable to pass citizenship examinations because of the above factors.

Immigration and Welfare Reform

The current immigration and welfare reforms are unfair and not equal protection to Hmong and Lao legal residents, senior citizens, disabled people, veterans and elderly people in Wisconsin and in other states. This is because the crackdown on "illegal aliens" affects the rights of legal refugees and permanent residents and political refugees such as the Hmong and Lao people. Hmong and Lao legal refugees and residents issues must be separated from the "illegal alien" issues. Since the United States is a nation of legal refugees and immigrants. Hmong and Lao people and refugees desire humanitarian assistance and public support from the state and federal government until they become economically self-sufficient. Those who are elderly or disabled people or are veterans must continue to receive SSI and other assistance with basic human needs from the state and federal governments without limitation of eligibility rules and period. The five (5) year limitation for SSI eligibility is unfair to Hmong and Lao legal refugees, because the legacies of the Vietnam War caused them to be mentally ill or disabled, unable to support themselves even after the five-year period is over.

Children and widows of Hmong and Lao soldiers should receive public assistance from the state government and the federal government.

Wisconsin Works or W-2

Wisconsin Works or W-2 Program will replace Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with job training and jobs. Consequently, Hmong and Lao Americans, legal and permanent residents, veterans, handicapped/disabled people, elderly people, and the members of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission, Lao Veterans of America, Inc. and Lao Human Rights Council, Inc., as well as other Hmong and Lao American organizations in Wisconsin, do respect and support the W-2 program. We do believe that education, job training, job skills, and job security can and will lead people to move out of the poverty level and welfare dependency. This can and will lead people to become good and productive citizens and economically sufficient when they get jobs and have job security. We, the members of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission, believe that those people who can work must work. However, we do not support the idea that it is just and fair to force senior citizens, the disabled or handicapped, and the elderly veterans, who cannot work because of serious health problems, illness, disability and other health problems.

Seven-Point Proposal and Recommendations to State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government

We, the members of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission — a task force commission on Immigration and Welfare reforms which was established by Hmong and Lao American people and concerned parties on November 2, 1996, in Eau Claire, Wisconsin — propose the following points on justice and assistance to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government.

1. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government to allow Hmong and Lao veterans, disabled and handicapped people, elderly and legal refugees and permanent residents to continue to receive SSI, disability benefits, food stamps, and other types of public assistance without regard to the category of "American citizenship," and without limitations under the eligibility rules.

2. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government to waive and exempt veterans, disabled persons, handicapped persons, elderly, widows, legal refugees and permanent residents, who came from Laos from the category of American citizenship because of the legacy of the Vietnam War which created major factors affecting these people's ability to become American citizens.

3. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government to consider humanitarian assistance to Hmong and Lao veterans and widows and their family members who cannot work because they are disabled and handicapped people, mentally and physically ill, and have other factors affecting their health conditions.

4. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government to consider citizenship to Hmong and Lao veterans, elderly, handicapped and disabled people because of the connection, cooperation and legacy of the Vietnam War.

5. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government not to force handicapped, disabled and elderly people and veterans who cannot function and work to do "public work" because of serious health problems, sickness, and mental illness, and other related symptoms.

6. Appeal to the State Senators and Representatives of Wisconsin and Members of the U.S Congress to open a hearings on the concerns and problems of the Hmong and Lao veterans, the legal refugees and permanent residents, the elderly, and the disabled and handicapped individuals because most of them will lose their supplemental Security Income (SSI) and other benefits.

7. Appeal to the Federal Government to grant benefits and veteran status to Hmong and Lao veterans, and appeal to the U.S. government to investigate chemical weapons and bombings in Laos which caused health problems and handicaps to many Hmong and Lao people in the United States.

We educate and inform the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal government that we Hmong and Lao veterans and legal refugees and permanent residents in Wisconsin agree with and appreciate the laws, objectives and policies of welfare reform which attempt to move people from welfare into the "work force" and to become good and productive citizens in this country. However, we do not support the policies which will cut off all benefits to the handicapped persons, disabled persons, elderly, widows, the poor and veterans who cannot go to work and who are not American citizens.

The U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform under Chairperson Barbara Jordan believes that:

"The safety net provided by needs-tested programs should continue to be available to those whom we have affirmatively accepted as legal immigrants into our communities.

"Under such circumstances, legal immigrants should be eligible for public benefits if they meet other eligibility requirements."

The members of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission support the above recommendations of the members of the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform. We urge the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government of the United States to consider the above seven-point proposal.

Foundation of American Values

The "Statue of Liberty" in New York Harbor states:

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

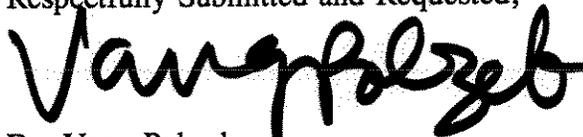
The Preamble of the Wisconsin Constitution says, "We, the people of Wisconsin, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure its blessings, form a more perfect government, insure domestic tranquility and promote the general welfare, do establish this constitution."

The Preamble of the Constitution of the United States of America promises:

"We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Consequently, the above values are the foundation of justice, liberty, civil rights, human rights, equal protection, welfare promotion, humanitarian assistance, the guarantee of SSI benefits and other necessities of basic human needs to American people and Hmong and Lao legal and permanent residents and refugees in Wisconsin and in other states in this country. The above "American values" must be kept by the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government of the United States toward the future.

Respectfully Submitted and Requested,



Dr. Vang Pobzeb

Chairman

Lao-Hmong Justice Commission
and Members of the Commission

Signatures of the Members of the Commission

Dr. Vang Pobzeb, Chairman

Vang Pobzeb

Mr. Pang Bliu Vang, Co-Chairman

Pang Bliu Vang

Mr. Joe Bee Xiong, Co-Chairman

Joe Bee Xiong

Mr. Cher Pao Lee, Co-Chairman

Cher Pao Lee

Mr. Vaughn Vang, Co-Chairman

Vaughn Vang



Lao Human Rights Council, Inc.

P.O. Box 1606
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54702
Phone (715) 831-8355
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**Statement of Dr. Vang Pobzeb
Chairman of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission
Madison, Wisconsin
March 15, 1997**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

On November 2, 1996, more than 500 Hmong and Lao American people, senior citizens, disabled people, and veterans met in Eau Claire. We established the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission, which is a task force commission to study the questions of Immigration and Welfare Reforms. This Commission is composed of members from most of the Hmong and Lao American communities in Wisconsin.

The purpose of this Commission is to study the questions of poverty levels, questions of the cut-off of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and other necessary benefits and assistance to Hmong and Lao legal permanent residents who are not American citizens in Wisconsin. In the past three months, the Commission has received more than 1,000 letters and petitions from Hmong and Lao people throughout Wisconsin. These letters are from disabled people, senior citizens, veterans, and legal permanent residents. They are political refugees. The letters are from those people who were recruited, trained and used by the U.S. government during the Vietnam War. They called upon the Commission to bring their concerns on the cut-off of SSI benefits, food stamps and other basic human needs to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government for support.

After three months of study and investigation, the members of the Commission and planning committee of this conference propose the following recommendations to the State Government and Federal Government:

1. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government to continue to provide Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits and other public assistance to Hmong and Lao veterans, disabled people, senior citizens, legal refugees and permanent residents without regard to the category of "American citizenship" and without limitations under the eligibility rules.
2. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government to waive and exempt veterans, disabled persons, handicapped persons, elderly, widows, legal refugees and permanent residents, who came from Laos from the category of American citizenship because of the legacy of the Vietnam War

which created major factors affecting these people's ability to become American citizens.

3. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government not to force disabled and elderly people and veterans who cannot function and work to do "public work" because of mental illness, sickness and other related symptoms.

The members of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission recommend that those people who can work must be working, however, we do not support or endorse the policy of forcing disabled people, senior citizens and veterans to do public work even though medical doctors certify that these people should not work because of their illnesses or handicaps. Therefore, the Commission recommends that the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government must closely monitor the policy and practice of W-2 in Wisconsin.

In 1997, there are over 5,000 Hmong and Lao American students in undergraduate schools in colleges and universities in the United States. In the past decade, sixty-five Hmong persons received PhDs, became medical doctors, teachers, professors, lawyers and professionals. Over 1,500 students received bachelor degrees from colleges and universities in the past ten years. In the year 2000, there will be over 6,000 Hmong and Lao American students in colleges and universities in the United States. More than 200 people received masters degrees and other professional degrees. Most Hmong and Lao American people are hardworking and productive citizens in Wisconsin and other states. They have been paying taxes to the State governments and the Federal Government.

Only 5,000 - 10,000 people of 40,000 Hmong and Lao people in Wisconsin need assistance and SSI benefits from the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government. About 40,000 of 263,000 Hmong and Lao people in the United States depend on assistance and SSI support from State governments and the Federal Government. This shows major progress in the economic and educational development of Hmong and Lao American people in Wisconsin and other states in this country.

One man — Tou Vang of Menomonie, Wisconsin — said that, "If the government cuts SSI benefits to me, I will have no place to stay. I will have no food to eat. I will kill myself. I worked for the U.S. government for more than 15 years. Now I am crippled. I have no country. When I was a young man, the U.S. government recruited, trained and used me to defend foreign policy and the security of the United States. When the U.S. government lost the Vietnam War, the U.S. government went home. The U.S. government opened the door for the communist Lao government to kill many members of my family and many thousands of Hmong people in Laos. I need support and assistance from the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government." There are many thousands of cases similar to that of Tou Vang of Menomonie.

The purpose of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission is to educate and inform the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government that Tou Vang and many thousands of disabled people, veterans and senior citizens and legal permanent residents still need support and

Speech of Dr. Vang Pobzeb
Page 3

assistance. We believe that these people will not enjoy civil rights, human rights, freedom, democracy, justice, liberty and equal protection if they do not receive food, shelter and other basic human needs.

We call for support and assistance from the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government in Washington, D.C.

Thank you for your assistance and support.

Madison, Wisconsin, March 15, 1997

**STATEMENT OF MR. LY TOUPAO
FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF OF MILITARY SPECIAL GUERRILA UNIT (SGU)
FROM 1961 TO 1975**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, our Patriotic Lao Veterans, members of State representatives and senators, governor Tommy Thompson, members of U.S. Congress, and distinguished guests.

First of all, I am sorry that General Vang Pao has prior commitment, and can not be here today. Therefore, I was asked to come instead.

I, Ly Toupao, former Colonel, Chief of Staff of military Special Guerrilla Unit (SGU) from 1961 to 1975, at Long Cheng, Military Region II, under the commandant of General Vang Pao.

It is my gratitude to have this opportunity to speak to you today regarding the effects of Welfare Reform, particularly the Social Security Income which will be cut off to those refugees who are veterans, elderly, and disabled who are not yet U.S. citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to give you a brief background of the Vietnam War as to what affects our people.

In 1961 President John F. Kennedy asked the Royal Lao Government to help the United States to fight against communist spread in Indochina. In doing so, our force blocked and destroyed North Vietnamese forces and the critical supplied line - namely The Ho Chiminh Trail stretching from North Vietnam to South Vietnam along side the Lao-Vietnam borders. In addition, we rescued American pilots shot down by North Vietnam along side the Lao-Vietnam border. This account was witnessed and acknowledged by General Harry Aderholt's speech at the Veteran Celebration on July 22, 1995 in Denver, Colorado which I bring with me.

Patriotic soldiers of the Royal Lao were killed more than 40,000, leaving tens of thousands maimed, widowed and orphaned as you can see some of them in the audience today.

In 1973, the United States signed a Peace Agreement with the counter parties in Paris, France to end the war in Indochina. Relatively, there was another agreement signed in Vientiane, Laos by the Coalition government, ensuring peace and security in Laos, and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Laos.

In respect with the accord, the allied troops, including the Americans withdrew their troops and advisors completely by 1975, but the Communist violated the accord and took over Laos.

The Vietnam war was not only ended in a major loss to us, the U.S., and the free world, but it also ended in a terrible revenge.

The Coalition Government was dissolved by the Communists. They issued a genocidal system by arresting the King, Queen, the Crown Prince, with more than 46 thousands military and police officers, government officials, and ordinary citizens. These people were imprisoned and tortured to death in Viengxai, Sam Neau Province and other unknown sites without human rights concerns. This inhumane killing was manipulated to the general public and outside world that these people were only taken to be educated in the reeducation camps.

The communists also rounded up any person in the country side who was suspected to be involved in the war for reeducation without knowing to the outside world. Because of this cruel treatment, hundreds of thousands who had served with the U.S. forces escaped to Thailand, and finally were resettled in third countries of more than five hundred thousand (500,000).

Those, who were not able to escape, retreated to the jungle to fight for daily survival until today. Because we were fighting alongside with the U.S., we were regarded as number one enemy by the Lao Communist and its associates.

Those of us who were fortunate to resettle in the United States are political and legal refugees. Many of us have become U.S. citizens and become economic-self-sufficiency. However, there are still many who are severe disabled, elderly, and widowed from the Vietnam War in which they can neither work nor pass citizenship.

Therefore, I would propose the following three points:

1. We ask the United States government to give a special consideration to exempt SSI actions for the elders, veterans, disabled persons, and widows
2. We ask the U.S. government grant U.S. citizenship to these groups without difficult process.
3. We ask the United States to help bring Laos back to a democratic state where freedom and human rights are recognized in order to end the social and welfare problem.

Thank you!



Lao Human Rights Council, Inc.

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**Statement of Dr. Vang Pobzeb
Chairman of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission
Madison, Wisconsin
March 15, 1997**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

On November 2, 1996, more than 500 Hmong and Lao American people, senior citizens, disabled people, and veterans met in Eau Claire. We established the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission, which is a task force commission to study the questions of Immigration and Welfare Reforms. This Commission is composed of members from most of the Hmong and Lao American communities in Wisconsin.

The purpose of this Commission is to study the questions of poverty levels, questions of the cut-off of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and other necessary benefits and assistance to Hmong and Lao legal permanent residents who are not American citizens in Wisconsin. In the past three months, the Commission has received more than 1,000 letters and petitions from Hmong and Lao people throughout Wisconsin. These letters are from disabled people, senior citizens, veterans, and legal permanent residents. They are political refugees. The letters are from those people who were recruited, trained and used by the U.S. government during the Vietnam War. They called upon the Commission to bring their concerns on the cut-off of SSI benefits, food stamps and other basic human needs to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government for support.

After three months of study and investigation, the members of the Commission and planning committee of this conference propose the following recommendations to the State Government and Federal Government:

1. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government to continue to provide Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits and other public assistance to Hmong and Lao veterans, disabled people, senior citizens, legal refugees and permanent residents without regard to the category of "American citizenship" and without limitations under the eligibility rules.
2. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government to waive and exempt veterans, disabled persons, handicapped persons, elderly, widows, legal refugees and permanent residents, who came from Laos from the category of American citizenship because of the legacy of the Vietnam War

which created major factors affecting these people's ability to become American citizens.

3. Appeal to the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government not to force disabled and elderly people and veterans who cannot function and work to do "public work" because of mental illness, sickness and other related symptoms.

The members of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission recommend that those people who can work must be working, however, we do not support or endorse the policy of forcing disabled people, senior citizens and veterans to do public work even though medical doctors certify that these people should not work because of their illnesses or handicaps. Therefore, the Commission recommends that the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government must closely monitor the policy and practice of W-2 in Wisconsin.

In 1997, there are over 5,000 Hmong and Lao American students in undergraduate schools in colleges and universities in the United States. In the past decade, sixty-five Hmong persons received PhDs, became medical doctors, teachers, professors, lawyers and professionals. Over 1,500 students received bachelor degrees from colleges and universities in the past ten years. In the year 2000, there will be over 6,000 Hmong and Lao American students in colleges and universities in the United States. More than 200 people received masters degrees and other professional degrees. Most Hmong and Lao American people are hardworking and productive citizens in Wisconsin and other states. They have been paying taxes to the State governments and the Federal Government.

Only 5,000 - 10,000 people of 40,000 Hmong and Lao people in Wisconsin need assistance and SSI benefits from the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government. About 40,000 of 263,000 Hmong and Lao people in the United States depend on assistance and SSI support from State governments and the Federal Government. This shows major progress in the economic and educational development of Hmong and Lao American people in Wisconsin and other states in this country.

One man — Tou Vang of Menomonie, Wisconsin — said that, "If the government cuts SSI benefits to me, I will have no place to stay. I will have no food to eat. I will kill myself. I worked for the U.S. government for more than 15 years. Now I am crippled. I have no country. When I was a young man, the U.S. government recruited, trained and used me to defend foreign policy and the security of the United States. When the U.S. government lost the Vietnam War, the U.S. government went home. The U.S. government opened the door for the communist Lao government to kill many members of my family and many thousands of Hmong people in Laos. I need support and assistance from the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government." There are many thousands of cases similar to that of Tou Vang of Menomonie.

The purpose of the Lao-Hmong Justice Commission is to educate and inform the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government that Tou Vang and many thousands of disabled people, veterans and senior citizens and legal permanent residents still need support and

Speech of Dr. Vang Pobzeb
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assistance. We believe that these people will not enjoy civil rights, human rights, freedom, democracy, justice, liberty and equal protection if they do not receive food, shelter and other basic human needs.

We call for support and assistance from the State Government of Wisconsin and the Federal Government in Washington, D.C.

Thank you for your assistance and support.

Madison, Wisconsin, March 15, 1997

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FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF OF MILITARY SPECIAL GUERRILLA UNIT (SGU)
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Thank you!

*Laotian American Recognition Day
Brooks Field - Colorado School of Mines
Saturday, July 22, 1995*

General Vang Pao, Lao-Hmong Leaders, Lao-Hmong People, Representatives from Air America, Air Commandos, Ravens FACS, Special Forces, United States Army, Navy and Air Forces, United States Department of State, CIA, Ladies and Gentlemen:

More than 34 years ago, in the fall of 1960, I first met General Vang Pao, then Lt. Col. Vang Pao, and some of his Lao-Hmong leaders at Padong, Laos. We drank that powerful rice whiskey, and with Mr. Bill Lair, talked about the forthcoming air resupply of weapons and ammo for the Lao-Hmong guerrillas, to assist them in the fight against the communist forces in Laos.

In those early days, the United States government was looking for allies to support its policies in Southeast Asia. The Lao-Hmong were seeking to gain equal rights as free citizens of Laos. Not only were they seeking freedom and equal rights, but they were willing to fight and die for it. Agreement was reached, and Vang Pao organized and led his people in a war against the communists. They believed they had a trustworthy ally, the United States of America, who would stand by them to the end, and never go back on its solemn promises that had been agreed to. So, for the next 13 years, these valiant people supported the United States every request. They sacrificed thousands of their young, brave warriors in the belief that the United States of America would stay the course until final victory.

Today, we are gathered here to pay tribute to the most brave and loyal group of combat soldiers I have ever known. To those who made the supreme sacrifice, and to their families, I want you to know, that what my government did to your people, the Lao tribes, is inexcusable. We sacrificed the lives of your young men, your homeland and your freedom, and withdrew without regard to your well being and survival.

I can remember in the 1960's, the Lao-Hmong had succeeded in tying down thousands of North Vietnam's best soldiers in Military Region 2, of Laos. This resulted in the United States taking far fewer casualties in Vietnam. Your constant attacks on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and your protection of our forward staging rescue bases, Site 36, and the radar bombing facility at Site 85, were invaluable to the United States bombing offensive against North Vietnam.

Through all these years, the CIA and State Department pressured you to increase your activities in Northern Laos. Your response was always positive, regardless of the terrible suffering you endured. Your villages came under fire and many of your family members were killed or wounded. More than 10%, some 40,000 people, were casualties. Many of these were your finest young men, but you still remained a staunch and loyal ally.

Those of us who are here today, are veterans of the United States "Secret War" in Laos. We are very familiar with what your nation did for those many years of conflict in that secret war.

What did we do for you, our staunch and loyal ally? We provided you the wherewithal to pursue the war, as long as it served our purpose. Then, when our policymakers, in the United States, decided to withdraw from Laos, in 1975, we withdrew without looking back. Without looking back to ensure that our Lao-Hmong allies and their families were provided the wherewithal to relocate outside of Laos.

Without looking back to see that those in Laos, who could not escape, were properly represented in the United Nations

Without looking back to ensure that they did not spend the remainder of their lives in squalid refugee camps.

What really happened was that the thousands of Lao-Hmong, who remained in Laos, were brutally punished for their support of the United States. They were doused with deadly chemicals from the air, forced from their homes and villages, and incarcerated. Many died, being tortured or starved to death.

For those who fled to Thailand, what they thought was safety and refuge, became 20 years of incarceration in squalid camps administered by the Thai police. After 20 years, the U.S. State Department has not been able to relocate these brave allies. Some 30,000 remain in the camps today. They are now faced with forced repatriation to Laos--and for many, to the same communist government they fled from 20 years ago--a government that is partially controlled by the Lao-Hmong's dreaded enemy, the North Vietnamese.

During the height of the Lao-Hmong involvement, the CIA budget for Laos was three quarters of a billion dollars annually. While the United States has ignored its obligations to the Lao-Hmong, troops have been deployed to Desert Storm to prevent Iraq from over-running and annexing Kuwait. Combat forces have been deployed to Bosnia, Panama, and Somalia. America has given humanitarian assistance around the world -- BUT NOTHING TO THE LAO-HMONG.

We Americans, here today, and throughout the United States, should hang our heads in shame -- first, for abandoning these loyal allies, in 1975, without a real effort to evacuate them; and secondly, for walking off and never looking back.

"How many of you out there, who fought and drank with the Lao-Hmong, pledged your support to them, tied the strings on your wrists, making you eternal brothers? How many of you ever looked back to see what was happening, or what has happened, to your loyal allies? How many of you have written or visited your former allies with offers of support?"

Very few, if any of the thousands of CIA, State Department, Air America, Continental Air, Bird Air, Air Commandos, Special Forces, and all represented here today, have concerned themselves with the brave, Lao-Hmong people. But, it is not too late. We need to band together and raise hell with our government in Washington. We need to bash the State Department for its sorry records. To be successful, we need to flood Washington with hundreds of thousands of letters to our Congress, making it known that we consider our State Department the center of the problems.

If we can provide 4,000 Iraqi enemy POW's with refuge in the United States of America, we can surely handle the relocation of the most loyal American Allies in the history of the United States.

I humbly seek your support, and that of your organizations, in settling this long overdue obligation.

Thank you.

*Brig. General Harry C. (Heinie) Aderholt
United States Air Force, Ret.*