

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4315

March 27, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

I write to draw your attention to recent reports that U.S. military veterans are being deported. The United States is home to 21,369,602 veterans and I represent close to 40,000 of them. Deporting our veterans, many of whom are highly decorated and fought to save American lives, is a shameful and avoidable act. I am working with my colleagues in the U.S. Congress to address this, and I call on you to issue an Executive Order expediting the citizenship process for honorably discharged veterans with no criminal history prior to joining the military.

As you know, the vast majority of our current military members are U.S. citizens; however, some of those serving have not completed the citizenship process. There are veterans from all eras who entered military service as lawful permanent residents that, despite their eligibility, did not obtain citizen status during or after completing their service.

Under our current laws, a lawful permanent resident veteran who is convicted of a non-violent offense or minor infraction could face deportation. Even more troubling, these veterans may be subject to removal from the U.S. for conduct directly related to their service in combat. Honorably discharged veterans, who risked their lives to defend and protect this country, suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and other service-connected conditions that lead to behaviors that put them at risk of being deported. It is clear that by leaving these illnesses untreated, we are doing a disservice to our service members and to our country. Further, once these veterans are deported, they lose access to VA home loans, education, healthcare and other benefits they have properly earned through their service to our country.

One of the impediments to solving this problem is that the federal government has not kept an official record of how many of these veterans fit this criteria. By directing the Department of Homeland Security to identify lawful permanent resident veterans who were discharged or released from the Armed Forces under honorable conditions; not including individuals who have been convicted of voluntary manslaughter, murder, or rape as well as individuals whose enlistments or appointments in the Armed Forces were procured in a fraudulent manner. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security should expedite the processing of citizenship applications and allow for veterans' citizenship status to be considered during removal proceedings.

While we may not agree on every aspect of immigration policy, changing this policy is an important first step in uniting our country and supporting our veterans is something we can all agree on. When you ran for president, you promised to take care of our veterans. This Executive Order would keep with those promises.

Freedom isn't free. I encourage you to take immediate action and I look forward to working with you to bring our heroes home.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me through my Chief of Staff, Jose Borjon, at (202) 225-2531 with further questions. I stand ready to be a resource to you and your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'V. Gonzalez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress