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LULAC SAYS STOP DEPORTING OUR NON-CITIZEN VETERANS

Nation's Oldest & Largest Civil Rights Organization Calls for USCIS to End Removals Following GAO Report Findings

Washington, DC - A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report issued June 6, 2019 has confirmed a far different pattern from what were previously regarded as isolated incidents of deportations involving non-citizens who served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The findings were released in response to a request by Rep. Mark Takano, (D-CA) and describe in detail the systemic nature of the unwarranted deportations.

“The facts uncovered through this analysis are painful to accept because they confirm deliberate and cruel actions against men and women who served bravely defending our country,” says Domingo Garcia, National President. “It just goes to show the lack of regard for the rights guaranteed under the Constitution including a fair legal system under this Administration,” added Garcia.

The report entitled, *“Immigration Enforcement: Actions Needed to Better Handle, Identify, and Track Cases Involving Veterans”* states that ICE “did not consistently follow its policies involving veterans who were placed in removal proceedings” and “does not have reasonable assurance that it is consistently implementing its policies for handling veterans’ cases.”

Garcia says the GAO identified 250 cases of veterans who were placed in removal proceedings between fiscal years 2013-2018; of which nearly 100 were removed (including disabled veterans). “While this figure sheds light upon the nature of this injustice, we believe this number may be conservative given the limitations in data collection by ICE and USCIS involving veterans’ cases,” states Garcia. “Currently, there are veterans around the country awaiting deportation proceedings and many of those are being held in for-profit detention centers pending hearings in a system “bursting at the seams” according to the American Bar Association. Now, this report concludes that ICE is ignoring its own policies regarding veterans,” he adds.

The GAO report makes recommendations for Mark A Morgan, Acting Director of ICE to consider but Carlos Luna, President of LULAC Green Card Veterans, Council #5310, based in Chicago, Illinois says, the recommendations are insufficient and do not address ways to repatriate veterans already deported. “ICE has consistently demonstrated a lack of regard for its own policies and failed to act on its own accord to correct these operational deficiencies despite several years of pressure from advocates from throughout the United States. Moreover, the report also confirms that non-citizen service members and veterans have been adversely affected by the policy changes since 2017. It’s clear that Congress must act through legislation to save our veterans from what is essentially forced exile,” he adds.

At the National level, LULAC calls the following actions to be taken across the U.S.:

1. Immediately terminate deportation proceedings for all veterans currently in process of being removed from the United States;
2. Immediately review of cases involving veterans who have been deported and start the process of repatriation;
3. Initiate Congressional Hearings with subpoenas for deported veterans to testify about their personal experiences to ensure comprehensive legislation is introduced and passed to prevent a recurrence of these deportations in the future.

For more information contact Carlos Luna (cluna@greencardvets.org)

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About LULAC

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) is the nation's largest and oldest civil rights volunteer-based organization that empowers Hispanic Americans and builds strong Latino communities. Headquartered in Washington, DC, with 1,000 councils around the United States and Puerto Rico, LULAC's programs, services and advocacy address the most important issues for Latinos, meeting critical needs of today and the future. For more information, visit www.lulac.org.