

PRECEDE: Senator Cardin (D-MD) and Congressman Hoyer (MD-5th) joined with Texas Congressman Sam Johnson (R) in introducing legislation to grant a Federal Charter to the Korean War Veterans Association.

KOREAN WAR VETERANS DESERVE RECOGNITION **By Senator Benjamin L. Cardin and Congressman Steny Hoyer**

Fifty-five years ago this July, the Korean War ended after great sacrifice. Waged for three years on the Korean Peninsula, the Korean War involved 5.7 million Americans, with 36,000 soldiers making the ultimate sacrifice. Yet, the Korean War, often referred to as the “Forgotten War,” has not commanded the recognition or respect that it deserves.

Fortunately, that has come to end. In June, Congress passed legislation to grant a Federal Charter to the Korean Veterans Association (KWVA), one of the few veterans’ service organizations of its size that has not been recognized with the prestigious classification. The President signed the bill into law on June 30, in time for the July 27th anniversary of the end of the war.

Congress has long recognized various military and veterans patriotic organizations in public law. While a Federal Charter does not confer any special rights, privileges or benefits to a membership organization, it is a public acknowledgement that a group serves the public interest by providing its members important services and community support.

Granting this charter to the Korean War Veterans Association will focus more attention on issues of concern to Korean War veterans, and it will allow the KWVA to fully participate on veterans’ advisory panels and select groups with other congressionally-chartered veterans and military organizations. This is important because 13 states deny membership on veterans’ advisory panels to groups without a Federal Charter.

Incorporated in 1985, the KWVA is the only fraternal veterans’ organization in the United States devoted exclusively to Korean War veterans, and the only U.S. member of the International Federation of Korean War Veterans Association. Over the last two decades, the 25,000-member charitable association has established a strong record of service and commitment to fellow Korean War veterans, ranging from efforts on behalf of Project Freedom to its successful campaign to construct a national Korean War Veterans Memorial on the National Mall.

This year marks the 55-year anniversary of the end of the Korean War, and reminders of this significant conflict are still with us. Currently, approximately 28,000 U.S. soldiers are stationed in Korea, many patrolling the 155-mile wide demilitarized zone (DMZ) that stretches the entire width of the Korean Peninsula. The corridor follows the Military Demarcation Line established by the 1953 Armistice Agreement between the two Koreas -- which are still technically at war. Today, the DMZ is the last remaining Cold War-

style frontier in the world, bristling with sensors, tank traps and automatic artillery.

It's important that we never forget the sacrifices made by Americans during the Korean War and those who have served in Korea since the war's end. Approximately 1.2 million Korean War veterans are still living, and this law gives them the recognition they deserve -- and that is long overdue. It is a small expression of our nation's appreciation and gratitude, and it will help ensure that those who served in the "Forgotten War" are no longer forgotten.

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