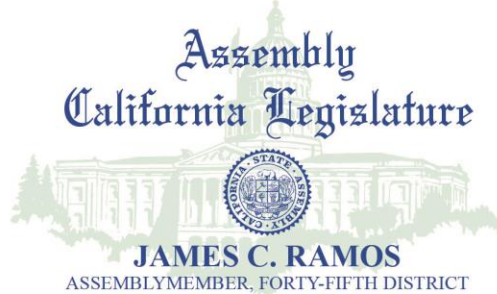


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COMMITTEES
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ECONOMY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SELECT COMMITTEES
CHAIR, NATIVE AMERICAN AFFAIRS
CHAIR, YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN SAN
BERNARDINO COUNTY

March 20, 2025

Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
United States Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

RE: Native American War Heroes Historical Acknowledgments

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

As chairman of the bipartisan California Legislative Native American Caucus, my members and I urge you to restore without delay the Department of Defense's (DoD) erasure of historical acknowledgements honoring the invaluable contributions of the World War II tribal Code Talkers. Members of the Navajo, Comanche, Lakota, Muscogee, Mohawk, Meskwaki, Tlingit, Hopi, Cree, Crow and Choctaw Nations all heroically served as Code Talkers. Choctaw, Cherokee, Comanche, Osage, Lakota and Cheyenne Nations also served in this same capacity during World War I.

I also urge you to restore the iconic remembrances of a turning point in WWII of the raising of the U.S. flag atop the Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima by six Marines, including Pfc. Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian as well as White servicemen. It is also disrespectful to eliminate them from acknowledgement. Furthermore, I ask that the DoD use a more considered approach to fulfilling its legitimate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) objectives. The members of our Caucus ask you to respect the incontrovertible truth that historical acknowledgements of Native Americans, Latino Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans and others do not place one group above another but rather demonstrate that all groups contributed to American military victories during times of peril.

These acknowledgements are not wasteful or immoral, they are solemn truths and integral parts of our country's rich and diverse history. Tragically, our history too often deliberately ignored the contributions of some groups by promoting false narratives that only one group of people built the United States. Presenting the accurate and complete truth about our history reinforces the shared reality that all have suffered hardships and all have helped build our great nation. Every historical reference and acknowledgement about our shared past that has been erased during your tenure should immediately be restored out of the respect for those who endured tremendous sacrifices and paid the ultimate price in the line of duty.

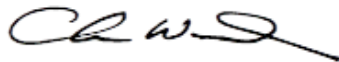
These DoD actions have reversed decades of hard work. They seek to obliterate nearly a century of some of America's most important history. It is extremely offensive when the contributions of Native Americans—the first peoples of this continent—are omitted and rendered meaningless. Native Americans have served and continue to serve at a higher per capita rate than any other demographic, both historically and currently. They have laid their lives on the line, as have other groups of citizens, despite the systematic denial of citizenship, voting rights, and other liberties accorded others.

Please do what is decent and right.

Sincerely yours,



James C. Ramos
Assemblymember, 45th District
Chair, Native American Caucus



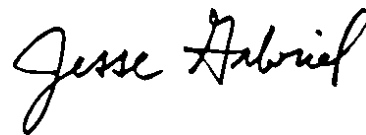
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Chair, LGBTQ Caucus



Mike Fong
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Chair, API Caucus



Scott Wiener
Senator, 11th District
Co-Chair, Jewish Caucus



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