

27 March 2022

Subject: Letter in support of H6606

Dear Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi, Chairman Samuel A. Azzinaro and the Members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee,

I am writing in support for House Bill 6606 and establishing a commission to study the eventual construction of a Vietnam War Memorial in our capital city, Providence.

I served in Vietnam from September 27, 1969 to October 12, 1970 as a Combat Infantryman with the 199th Light Infantry Brigade (“Redcatchers”), Alpha Company, 3rd Brigade, 7th Infantry Regiment (“Cottonbalers”). I am a recipient of the Silver Star for Valor, the third highest medal for bravery in the United States Army.

I realize that we have a beautiful memorial in our Veteran State Cemetery in Exeter, Rhode Island along with memorials of all branches of service from all wars. However, when we stroll down the row of beautiful memorials in Downtown Providence, there is one that is sadly missing. All other wars are represented on that Mall except for the Vietnam War. That is somewhat of an insult to all Rhode Islanders who served, who served, who were wounded physically, emotionally, psychologically and worst of all spiritually. When the soul is wounded, it takes years to recover if the veteran even gets that far.

I am a 100% service-connected disabled veteran and a native Rhode Islanders. I find it in a way typical why such a memorial has not yet been built in our memory. It has a ring of the past when we came home from the war to an angry nation - a nation angry against the Vietnam War and also a nation angry at we who served. We all went into hiding for many years. For me it took 13 years to begin talking about the war. For many it took even longer.

Now is the time to rectify the feeling of abandonment and proceed with the design, construction and dedication of Rhode Island’s own Vietnam Veteran Memorial. We are an aging group - we are in our 70’s and 80’s. We need to see this Memorial before our Heavenly Father calls us home.

Respectfully yours,

Father Philip G. Salois

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