

The Honorable Timothy Waltz
Governor of Minnesota

The Honorable Melissa Hortman
Speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives

The Honorable Leon Lillie
Chairman of the Legacy Finance Committee

The Honorable Ruth Richardson
Chairman of the House Education Policy Committee

The Honorable Andrew Lang
Chairman of the Veterans and Military Affairs Committee

The Honorable Larry Herke
Commissioner of the Department of Veteran Affairs

The Honorable Paul Gezelka
Minnesota State Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Steve Green
Ranking Member of the House Legacy Finance Committee

The Honorable Sondra Erickson
Ranking Member of the House Education Policy Committee

The Honorable Rob Ecklund
Chairman of the House Veterans & Military Affairs Committee

The Honorable Mary Cathryn Ricker
Commissioner of Minnesota Department of Education

Dear Minnesota State Leaders,

The undersigned Southeast Asian educators, veterans and community leaders of Minnesota encourage you to support HF 2428, the Southeast Asian Vietnam War Documentary Series created by the Coalition of Allied Vietnam War Veterans (CAVWV), Minnesota film makers and our Southeast Asian communities.

We are joining the CAVWV and two Minnesota filmmakers in helping complete the history of the Vietnam War by telling our first hand experiences in this unprecedented first of its kind documentary series. We seek funding for this project from the Minnesota Cultural and Legacy Fund whose mission and creation is perfectly suited for this project. For the first time our voices will be heard and our experiences will be recorded.

As you may know the renowned documentary filmmaker Ken Burns partnered with the Public Broadcasting Service and produced an eighteen-hour, ten episode documentary series in 2018 about the Vietnam War, unfortunately it almost entirely concentrated on American efforts in South Vietnam, however, egregiously omitting mention of the covert war efforts of our Lao, Hmong, Khmer, Montagnard, Vietnamese and other mountain tribes who fought and died in the tens of thousands in support of the United States in North Vietnam, Laos, South Vietnam and Cambodia. Those who emigrated to the United States and are now productive citizens number in excess of 4,000,000 persons.

Twin Cities Public Television also produced the Minnesota Remembers Vietnam Project that helped promote the Burns PBS documentary series. TPT also omitted our Southeast Asian communities from its project. It is difficult to understand why such respected filmmakers and broadcasters could omit so many who were there from the inception of the War and who suffered, sacrificed and ultimately were forced to leave their homes and country. Omission from these projects only added to the humiliation and deep sorrow our Asian communities have experienced. Minnesotas Southeast Asian population now exceeds 250,000 citizens.

Omitting Laos and Cambodia from the PBS series has left the public largely unaware of the part played and the sacrifices made by all Southeast Asians during the War. It is a grievous wrong to perpetrate on us and on the public if the Burns documentary is the only historical contribution used in educational settings because it will deprive students of a complete history of the War that caused our immigration to the United States. It also would add to American misunderstanding of our many contributions to America something that might further contribute to the deadly attitudes toward Asians we are now seeing in our county. As you know Asian racism is an ugly and debilitating aspect of our culture today. We sincerely believe that one way of healing our society is to help explain and enlighten our communities about the rich and productive role our Southeast Asian communities have played in Minnesota since the War.

This series employs two Minnesota film makers who will draw from the Minnesota arts community to create a nine episode series. The CAVWV Southeast Asian veterans will reach out to all of our communities for their input and experiences. We also plan an additional feature film that will accompany all of the collected stories and will be offered to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC on the 50th Anniversary of the ending of the War, April 30, 2025. This will be a permanent and accessible collection of our personal accounts of the war.

Please support us and encourage your colleagues to support and fund this historic Minnesota project.

Sincerely,

(*undersigned*)

Principal producer and sponsor

Thomas Briggs, President
Coalition of Allied Vietnam War Veterans

Scott Walker, Special Projects Director
Coalition of Allied Vietnam War Veterans

Minnesota Film Makers Arts Community

Cristobal Kresen
Director - K-Bar Media

Greg Silker
Producer - Silker Studios

Jeremy Wanek
Editor - Nocturnal Robot

Spencer Weaver
Lighting & Camara - Ambient House Productions

Tom Hambleton CAS
Sound Supervisor - Undertone Music

Jeff Johnson
Producer, Director of Photography - Motion 117

Chris Ray
Executive Producer Splice Here

George Sirbasku
Producer - StringLine Motion Picture Co.

Michael Tabor
Production Manager

Jared Neher
Producer - Vignette Pictures

Matt Silker
Director of Photography - Silker Studios

Michael Kramer
Owner/Producer - Ambient House Prod.

Tim Johnson
Dir. of Photography - Whitespace Films

Chad Amour
Director of Photography

Joel W. Sheagren
Producer/Co-Producer

Shawn Lewis
Producer - StringLine Motion Pictures

Kathryn Rogers
Wardrobe Specialist

Craig Rice
MCAD Mpls/St.Paul Int. Film Festival

Minnesota Veterans Organizations

Chu Chou Tchang - Hmong
*SGU Veterans and Families
Development of the USA*

Savuth Prak - Cambodia
Khmer Veterans & Allies

Khambang Sibounheuang - Laos
Royal Lao Airborne, MN

Ron Latchelt - United States
*United States Army Special Forces Association,
Chapter 20, Minneapolis, MN*

Tuan Anh Pham - South Vietnam
*President - Fellowship of the Republic of
Vietnam Armed Forces in Minnesota*

Insixiegmay Khao - Laos
Royal Lao Armed Forces and SGU Veterans

Jerry Kyser - United States
United Veterans Legislative Council of MN

Robert Pike - Canada
*United States Army, 101st Airborne &
Canadian Volunteers, MN*

Minnesota Asian Educators

Dr. Yang Dao - Hmong

Author & Professor of History, Hmong Studies

Dr. Ha Tuong - Vietnamese

Author and retired Mpls School Dist Principal

Christopher Xaphakdy - Laos

Higher Education Minnesota

Minnesota Asian Community Organizations

Thomas Tan Cao - Vietnam

Vietnamese Community of Minnesota

Yorn Yan - Cambodia

United Cambodian Association of Minnesota

Hoeun Hach - Cambodia

Sons & Daughters of Cambodia, MN

Ananh Sene Saenvilay - Laos

United Lao for Democracy, MN

Dien Hoang - Vietnam

Hue & Thua Thien Massacre Association, MN