

CITY OF FOUNTAINS
HEART OF THE NATION



KANSAS CITY
MISSOURI

Office of the Mayor

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February 20, 2014

The Honorable Roy Blunt
United States Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blunt:

The Congressional Gold Medal is Congress' highest expression of appreciation for achievements and contributions to America. Unfortunately, our nation has been slow in bestowing this honor on some of our bravest veterans, such as the 65th Infantry Regiment. To ensure these veterans receive overdue recognition of their bravery in battle I urge you to support S. 1174.

This bipartisan bill, S. 1174, would award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers. Created in 1899, the Army's 65th Infantry Regiment distinguished itself in combat over the years. In fact, by the end of the Korean War the regiment had earned a number of awards for extraordinary heroism, including 10 Distinguished Service Crosses, approximately 250 Silver Stars, over 600 Bronze Stars, nearly 3,000 Purple Hearts, and numerous award such as two Presidential Unit Citations, the nation's highest unit-level recognition.

Despite Puerto Ricans gaining U.S. citizenship in 1917, the Borinqueneers remained a segregated unit until after the Korean War, making the 65th the last segregated unit to be deactivated. With their proud history, the Borinqueneers join minority veterans like the Tuskegee Airmen, the Montford Point Marines, the Navajo Code Talkers and the Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team who serve as shining examples of heroism even while experiencing racism. It is time the Borinqueneers join these other minority veterans in receiving the Congressional Gold Medal for not only their sacrifice in battle, but also their steadfastness and courage in the face of discrimination.

As a Marine who served in the Vietnam War ensuring all of our brave veterans who sacrificed on behalf of our country, regardless of the color of their skin, receive the recognition due is near and dear to my heart. S. 1174 is critical to the Borinqueneers receiving the honor they earned for their patriotism and service to America.

Sincerely,

Sylvester "Sly" James
Mayor of Kansas City, Missouri