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DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS

DEPUTY WHIP

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS

NEW DEMOCRAT COALITION

July 31, 2023

Honorable Christine Wormuth  
Secretary of the Army  
101 Army Pentagon,  
Washington DC 20310-0101

Dear Secretary Wormuth,

I am writing to express my proud and avid support for the posthumous award of the Medal of Honor to Pvt. Marcelino Serna, a decorated hero of the First World War and a former resident of El Paso, Texas, a community I am honored to represent in Congress.

Pvt. Marcelino Serna is the most heavily decorated World War I veteran in Texas' history. He valiantly fought for the United States from 6 April, 1917 to 11 November, 1918. During his time in service, he demonstrated exceptional bravery and integrity, going so far as to conduct dangerous scouting missions alone, single-handedly capturing 24 enemy combatants while under heavy fire, and upholding the rules of war in protecting prisoners of war from wrongful execution at the hands of his fellow soldiers. Beyond his contributions on the battlefield, Pvt. Serna conducted his service at a time when the contributions of minority soldiers often went overlooked and underappreciated. In fact, Pvt. Serna was previously informed he was ineligible for the Medal of Honor for not speaking enough English to be promoted. Despite this, Pvt. Serna was the first Hispanic service member to receive the Distinguished Service Cross, and a true pioneer in the now long and storied history of Hispanic service members proudly contributing to our national defense. He is also a recipient of the Purple Heart, as well as the Croce al Merito di Guerra by the Italian government. I have been proud to lead efforts to recognize his sacrifice and exceptional bravery during my time in Congress, where I have secured language to authorize the posthumous awarding of the Medal of Honor to Pvt. Marcelino Serna in the National Defense Authorization Act for the second consecutive year.

In recent years, the United States and our military have engaged in a reflective conversation on our nation's history, and the impact that racism and injustice have had on providing soldiers, sailors, and airmen from minority communities the recognition we have owed them for so very long. Just this May, one of my home state's key military installations underwent a change from its former title of Fort Hood to its new name of Fort Cavazos – a symbol of our nation's seeking to turn the page on the dark chapter of the Confederacy and instead turning to recognize the

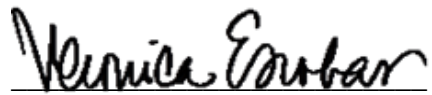
shining heroes of our history from the communities of color that have sacrificed for our nation by fighting prejudice while honorably donning the uniform in service to our country.

America's biggest strength is our diversity. However, the people of color and immigrants that have contributed so much to our military have for too long been hidden in the shadows of dark times in our history. Our country is now in the throes of efforts to remedy this oversight, to recognize these sacrifices and even further – to inspire future generations of Americans. Private Serna was one of the first to so courageously chart this path.

As we approach the start of Hispanic Heritage Month, this long overdue recognition is ever more timely. I humbly and respectfully request these historic contributions are taken into consideration while Army Human Resources Command reviews his nomination package, and I make this request with the city of El Paso, the great state of Texas, and Hispanic Americans who have so proudly sacrificed for this country in mind.

Thank you kindly for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Veronica Escobar". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress (TX-16)

Cc: Army Human Resources Command  
1600 Spearhead Division Ave,  
Fort Knox, KY 40122