

Date of Hearing: April 5, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
Laura Friedman, Chair  
ACR 21 (Megan Dahle) – As Introduced February 4, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge

**SUMMARY:** Designates the South Yuba River Bridge over State Highway Route 49 in the County of Nevada as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge.

**EXISTING LAW:** Assigns the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways including the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown, however the resolution requires Caltrans to determine the cost of erecting appropriate signs, consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system, and upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering that cost, to erect those signs.

**COMMENTS:** The Vietnam War was from 1955 to 1975, and was a conflict pitting the communist government of North Vietnam and its allies in South Vietnam, known as the Viet Cong, against the government of South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States (U.S.). The war – also called War Against the Americans to Save the Nation – is part of a larger regional conflict and a manifestation of the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. The U.S. sent its first wave of troops to Vietnam in March of 1965 and, by 1968, more than 540,000 troops were stationed throughout the area. The troops remained in the area until President Richard Nixon began ordering their withdrawal in 1969. U.S. soldiers remained in the area until 1973.

The Vietnam conflict resulted in 58,220 U.S. military fatal casualties, and approximately 1.3 million Vietnamese soldier fatalities. Approximately 5,575 Californians died while serving in Vietnam, and the conflict resulted in roughly 2 million civilian casualties between both North and South Vietnam. New Zealand fought for South Korea and lost about three dozen soldiers, Australia lost more than 500 soldiers and South Korea lost 3,000 troops in the conflict. Most casualties occurred in South Vietnam, where the main conflict occurred. During Operation Ranch Hand, 1961 to 1971 of the Vietnam War, the U.S. military sprayed 2 million gallons of Agent Orange, some contaminated with the toxic chemical Dioxin, over more than 10% of Southern Vietnam, as a part of the U.S. herbicidal warfare program. Vietnam's government claimed that 400,000 people were killed or maimed as a result of after effects, and that 500,000 children were born with birth defects.

The conflict resulted in Vietnam losing many of its people, and a lot of wealth. Its agriculture, business, and industry were disrupted, large parts of its countryside were scarred by bombs and defoliation, and its cities and towns were heavily laced with land mines. At the time of the most recent National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS) study in the late 1980s, it is estimated that 15 out of every 100 Vietnam Veterans (or 15%) were currently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

*Honoring Veterans:* According to the American War Library, as of February 28, 2019, it is estimated that approximately 610,000 Americans who served in land forces during the Vietnam War or in air missions over Vietnam between 1954 and 1975 are still alive.

The National Vietnam Veterans Memorial, also called The Wall, in Washington, D.C., honors members of the U.S. armed forces who served and died in the Vietnam War. The memorial, located near the western end of the Mall, is a black granite V-shaped wall inscribed with the names of those who were killed or missing in action.

The California Vietnam Veterans Memorial is located in the north-east corner of the State Capitol grounds in Sacramento. The Memorial is circular in design, with full relief bronze sculptures depicting scenes from daily life during the war. The 5,822 names of California's dead and missing are engraved on 22 black granite panels, arranged by their hometowns. AB 650 (Floyd), Statutes of 1984, established the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commission.

The South Yuba River Bridge over State Highway Route 49 in the County of Nevada is not an active bridge, but has sentimental value and is available for naming purposes. The stretch of State Highway Route 49 where the South Yuba River is crossed by Route 49 is a popular area for hikers and advanced river activities. The river is more treacherous here than in other areas of the park and must be treated with great respect, especially during spring runoff.

According to the author, “ACR 21 will designate the South Yuba River Bridge over State Highway Route 49 in the County of Nevada as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge to honor the men and women who fought in the Vietnam War and did not return home.”

In support, the Nevada County Consolidated Veterans Council writes, “(ACR-21) expresses a fitting tribute to the veterans that served in one of the longest wars in our country’s history. Not only for those that paid the ultimate price but for those that are still dealing with the injuries and trauma they experienced. This will be a fitting tribute and acknowledge their service.”

*Previous legislation:*

SCR 59 (Umberg) of 2020 proclaims June 19, 2020 as Veterans of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Day. *This resolution died in the Senate.*

SCR 3 (Umberg) of 2020 proclaims June 19, 2020 as Veterans of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Day. *This resolution died in the Senate.*

ACR 13 (Seyarto) of 2020 commemorates the 100th Anniversary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. *This resolution died in the Assembly.*

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Nevada County Consolidated Veterans Council

**Opposition**

None on file

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