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**Congressman Luis G. Fortuño**  
**Statement for the Record re H.R. 4289**  
June 24, 2008

It is with great pride that I submit this statement for the record in support of H.R. 4289, which will name the the Department of Veterans' Affairs Outpatient Clinic in Ponce, Puerto Rico after Captain Euripides Rubio. Captain Rubio was an officer in the United States Army who fought and, at age 28, died in combat in the jungles of South Vietnam. For the actions that led to his death, Captain Rubio was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, one of four residents of Puerto Rico to have earned this supreme honor. By naming the veterans' clinic after Captain Rubio, Congress pays tribute to his courage and, by extension, honors the hundreds of thousands of sons and daughters of Puerto Rico who have served in the armed forces of this great Nation. I thank the Congress, and particularly the Veterans' Affairs Committee, for helping to preserve the memory of an extraordinary American.

It is fitting that Ponce, where Captain Rubio was born in 1938, is known as "the City of Lions." Captain Rubio truly had the qualities of a lion—strength, courage, and fidelity. Those who served alongside him in the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry remember him as an inspirational leader and as a model soldier completely committed to his country and to his comrades.

It is impossible to read Captain Rubio's Medal of Honor citation without shaking one's head and wondering how the world produces men of such caliber. On the day of his death—November 8, 1966—enemy forces launched an attack against the battalion's defensive position in the Tay Ninh province. Machine gun fire, mortar rounds and rifle-launched grenades exploded within the defense perimeter. Captain Rubio chose to leave the relative safety of his post and "braved the withering fire to go to the area of most intense action where he distributed ammunition, re-established positions and rendered aid to the wounded." In the process, Captain Rubio was wounded twice.

Moments later, when a rifle company commander was medically evacuated, Captain Rubio assumed command. He received a third wound as he "selflessly exposed himself to the devastating enemy fire to move among his men to encourage them to fight with renewed effort."

While helping to evacuate wounded comrades, Captain Rubio observed that a smoke grenade, intended to mark the Viet Cong position for U.S. air strikes, had fallen perilously close to friendly lines. Captain Rubio ran to reposition the grenade but was immediately brought to his knees by enemy fire. Despite his many wounds, Captain Rubio picked up the grenade, ran through the deadly hail of fire to within 20 meters of the enemy position, and threw the grenade into the midst of the enemy before he fell for the final time. Because of Captain Rubio's actions, U.S. aircraft were able to identify and destroy the hostile positions.

The Medal of Honor citation ends with these simple but powerful words: "Captain Rubio's singularly heroic act turned the tide of battle, and his extraordinary leadership and valor were a magnificent inspiration to his men. His remarkable bravery and selfless concern for his men are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on Captain Rubio and the U.S. Army."

There are many important ways in which this Congress and this country can honor our Nation's warriors. We can—and should—work to ensure they have the proper equipment they need to fight. We can—and should—work to ensure that their families are taken care of during long deployments. We can—and should—work to ensure that, once they leave the service, our veterans receive the best educational opportunities and medical care available. Simply put, we should fight and sacrifice on behalf of those who have fought and sacrificed for us.

There is something else we can do, too. Something we as a country do not do enough of. And that is to publicly honor the most remarkable instances of bravery on the battlefield displayed by our men and women in uniform. In the last two years, six Americans have won the Medal of Honor for their actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. And yet one must struggle—often in vain—to find stories in the mainstream press about these present-day Euripides Rubios. Had they lived, these heroes would likely have been reluctant to talk about themselves. Such is the nature of soldiers. It is our obligation—and it should be our privilege—to publicly honor their achievements. And H.R. 4289 does precisely that.

Thanks to Congress's actions today, I know that many children in Puerto Rico, looking upon the clinic that bears his name, will ask their parents or grandparents who Euripides Rubio was. It is my fervent hope that, from the answer given, they will learn about this Lion of Ponce, who died far too young, but whose short life was filled with greatness.

Thank you very much.