

Testimony for Hearing at the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugee, Border Security and International Law – May 20 at 2:30pm

I am Lieutenant General (Retired) USA, (Retired). Commander Morales and I are here representing the American G. I. Forum. I feel that I am somewhat qualified to testify before this sub committee on this topic, since I spent over 41 years wearing the uniform of the Armed Forces of the greatest Nation in the world, the United States of America.

Let me make it clear that I am not an immigrant but I do understand and can relate to them. I am not sure how to categorize my Grandparents who arguably were some of the first settlers who came to this Continent, from the Iberian Peninsula, to what is now the State of New Mexico. I believe it was called New Spain then. My Grandparents didn't cross the border the border crossed them. My maternal Grandparents, who lived with us and helped raise me, never learned the English language. We spoke Spanish at home and I had to learn to speak English in my first year of school. They and my parents taught me a sense of patriotism and love of God and Country that compelled me to join the Military and rise from the rank of Private to Lieutenant General. Only in America is that possible. No one loves and appreciates this Country more than I.

I am here because I have seen and experienced, first hand the sacrifice that members and their families endure in the interest of gaining and maintaining peace and freedom for not only the U.S. but for the entire world. In my service my duties took me to every corner of the world. I was on all seven Continents and in more countries than I could have ever imagined. I was also fortunate in that I have been in all 54 States and Territories at least once. Over a lifetime I have been aware that we are not a perfect nation, we never have claimed to be, but with all its warts and sores and weakness we live in the greatest Country in the world, our United States of America and I'm extremely proud to be an American.

I have also realized that it is American Service Members which have made and kept us the greatest Nation in the world. These are men and women who have taken a solemn oath to protect and defend the oldest living Democratic document in the history of world. They subscribe to a code of conduct which states in its first article "I am an American Fighting Man/Woman, I serve in the forces that guard our Country and its way of life, I am prepared to give my life in its defense". Most men and women who have taken the oath have upheld it. All have sacrificed and some have made the ultimate sacrifice giving up their precious lives.

However; it is not only the Service Members but their families also pay the price for our freedom. The hardships they endure are unimaginable for those who have not experienced them. Unfortunately some Veterans and members of our Military and their families have not always been afforded the same rights and privileges that our Constitution guarantees most Citizens of our Society. That is why the American GI Forum, whom I represent today, exists. That is why I am here today to testify before this Committee. It is your responsibility, as well as ours, to insure that if we are willing to

send our troops in harms way that they and their families are guaranteed all of the benefits of our Constitution to include citizenship. Service members have a right to expect all of us do our part in not only supporting them but also their family members. The last thing they need when they are deployed in a dangerous situation is to worry about the well being of their loved ones.

Let me conclude by saying once again how proud I am to be an American and also to say that I am proud of my Hispanic heritage. Hispanics Americans have answered this nation's call in every crisis this Country has ever faced starting with the Revolutionary war. In 1993 I had the privilege of narrating a documentary for Telemundo, Hispanic Heroes that highlights the contribution of Hispanics to our national defense. This Documentary was awarded three Emmys. The American GI forum and the Producer and Director of this film are planning to make a sequel to the original film to include Hispanic contributions since 1993 to include all that has occurred post 9/11. We are meeting with Officials from PBS this Friday to discuss a proposal that we have sent to them asking them when it is produced if they will air it. These Documentaries tell the stories and shows interviews with some of those brave Veterans that we speak of during this testimony.

Please let me add that Hispanics are one of the many ethnic minorities and other proud veteran's that have served our Country in it's time of need. Many that were immigrants like the ones we represent today.

We urge you Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee to support our Immigrant Service Members and their families and pass this legislation.

Thank You.