

Grants would be given only to states that chose to take part, and in deference to Republican instincts in such matters, the states would be given the upper hand in designing their own programs.

The plan is also fiscally responsible. It comes equipped with its own financing device. The tax

in Congress's compe...
the harmful effects of tobacco, in favor of children's health, in favor of state decision-making and in favor of fiscal discipline. How many times do they get one like that? They ought to vote aye.

Debts to the Hmong

TO ANYONE with a memory and a commitment to keeping one's word, it is bound to come as a shock that the United States is still not fulfilling its obligations to its Hmong and Lao allies in the Vietnam War. Eleven years ago, Congress authorized the Vietnam Veterans National Medal for the now-American survivors of the secret army that helped America fight its battles in Laos in 1961-73 and that paid dearly for it. Yet only the other day was the medal actually bestowed on the few thousand veterans of that army who had gathered in Washington. In a march meant to recall their earlier escape across the Mekong River to Thailand, the Hmong group crossed the Potomac to the grave of John F. Kennedy, the first American president their units had served.

The Hmong, or "Meo," and Lao recruits formed under CIA direction at a time when their very presence and role were officially denied. Diverting large numbers of North Vietnamese soldiers from their primary (American) targets, the secret army gathered intelligence, protected U.S. navigational sites and rescued hundreds of downed American pilots. In turn,

the United States took on specific protective obligations and of course an overwhelming moral obligation. These debts were fulfilled only raggedly when Communist North Vietnam swept over Laos. Hmong and Lao soldiers and the families were alternately repressed by the victorious forces and forced into exile. Some 135,000 now live in the United States.

Their current complaints go well beyond the tardy receipt of medals for their valor. A concern for their kin has made them advocates of an American policy to press the Laotian government harder to ensure fair treatment for those left behind and to begin Hmong-language broadcasts on the new American-supported Radio Free Asia. They also protest the recent immigration-law changes that limit benefits to non-citizens, including elderly Hmong who have been unable to learn English for the citizenship exam.

In Arlington Cemetery, the Hmong unveiled a memorial to their combat veterans and American advisers. In the Lao and Hmong languages the writing on the monument states, "You will never be forgotten." They almost were.

Private Rail to Dulles? I... C

w
bu
ed
clie.
Sma
1992
vent
ing t
Prote
None
by th
the T
inspe
inves
Torr
doing

A
of ra
acro
Rich
Cour
aral
wor
boy
cor

re:
no
m
p
w