

116 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C.
JULY 30, 1970

SECRETARY MELVIN R. LAIRD
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

YOUR ANNOUNCED DETERMINATION TO MOVE AGGRESSIVELY TO BRING MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS INTO RESPONSIBLE JOBS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IS MOST CERTAINLY WELCOME. APPARENTLY HOWEVER YOUR DIRECTIVE AFFECTS ONLY CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT. I BELIEVE THAT YOU SHOULD TAKE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN BEHALF OF MINORITY GROUP MEMBERS WHO ARE IN THE UNIFORMED SERVICES. FOR EXAMPLE AMERICANS OF MEXICAN DESCENT HAVE SERVED AND DIED IN DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBERS IN EVERY WAR OF THIS CENTURY. THEIR GALLANTRY HAS BEEN UNQUESTIONED. YOU MAY NOT KNOW FOR EXAMPLE THAT IN WORLD WAR II SEVEN TEXANS RECEIVED THE MEDAL OF HONOR AND OF THESE FOUR WERE OF MEXICAN DESCENT. YET THIS MAJORITY CAME FROM A GROUP REPRESENTING ONLY ABOUT TEN PER CENT OF THE TOTAL STATE POPULATION. DESPITE THIS MAGNIFICENT ACHIEVEMENT AND MANY OTHERS AND DESPITE THE LARGE NUMBER OF MEN OF MEXICAN DESCENT WHO HAVE MADE CAREERS OF MILITARY SERVICE I KNOW OF NOT ONE WHO HAS EVER REACHED A RANK ABOVE COLONEL. THIS IS CERTAIN EVIDENCE THAT THESE DEDICATED COURAGEOUS AND SKILLED MEN HAVE BEEN DENIED THEIR JUST DESERTS. I HOPE THAT YOU WILL TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO BRING MEXICAN-AMERICAN SOLDIERS INTO THE SAME RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS THAT YOU PROMISE FOR CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES.

Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez