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Linda Chapa LaVia
STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 83RD DISTRICT

May 29, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Request to Review Clemency Petitions

Dear Mr. President,

Within the past month, students at the University of Chicago Law School have filed petitions for Presidential clemency on behalf of seven combat veterans: Robert Bales, Corey Claggett, Franklin Dunn, Calvin Gibbs, Clint Lorange, Derrick Miller, and Michael Williams. All of these soldiers were convicted of serious combat-related offenses while serving in either Iraq or Afghanistan. They were subsequently sentenced to imprisonment at Fort Leavenworth Disciplinary Barracks. While two of these veterans have since been paroled, five remain at Fort Leavenworth. The clemency petitions awaiting your review ask that these sentences be reduced or that the soldiers be pardoned. These seven petitions raise important issues about the sentencing of persons convicted of combat-related offenses in Iraq and in Afghanistan:

- Did the sentences take into account the fact that many of these soldiers were suffering from untreated Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injuries or other mental illnesses that played a substantial role in the offenses? And,
- Did the sentences take into account the difficult environment in which these men were asked to serve and the failure of the Army to clearly articulate the rules of engagement?

The petitions also ask for reinstatement of the much-needed PTSD treatment program at Fort Leavenworth which was discounted in 2015. As a veteran of the United States Army and the current Chair of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I understand what can happen to a soldier who serves in combat overseas. I write to request that your administration undertake a thorough review of each of these petitions, keeping in mind potential incurred mental illnesses and injuries.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L Chapa LaVia".

Linda Chapa LaVia
State Representative – 83rd District