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March 15, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500-0001

Dear President Obama:

It is my distinct privilege to write to you today to offer my voice of support for your awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom to the late Colonel Young Oak Kim.

You may not be aware, Mr. President, but I have the honor of serving one of the largest and most vibrant Korean American communities in America in the Seventh District of Georgia. In my few short years of serving them, it has become apparent to me their commitment to making our community a better place to live and America stronger as a nation. While Colonel Kim was not from the part of our nation I am blessed with representing, I know that he embodies the patriotism, the American spirit, and the commitment to those around them that so many Korean Americans in the Seventh District also share.

While I could go on for many pages about Colonel Kim's strong character and many accomplishments, all of the awards he earned while serving in our nation's military speak for themselves. Whether it's the Distinguished Service Cross he earned for his extreme bravery in the Battle of Anzio for conducting a heroic and highly dangerous raid across German enemy lines where he captured two German soldiers who revealed crucial intelligence to Allied forces that paved the way for the liberation of Rome, or the three Purple Hearts he was awarded for being wounded while valiantly serving our nation in battle, or the many other awards he's earned, Colonel Kim's commitment to our nation is clear and unquestionable.

It is more than just his actions and the awards he earned that make Colonel Kim worthy of the Medal of Freedom—it is his attitude as well. Being a Korean American assigned to the 100th Battalion, a Japanese American unit, Colonel Kim was asked by his superiors if he'd like a reassignment for fear of cultural tension, to which he replied: "There is no Japanese nor Korean here. We're all Americans and we're fighting for the same cause." I could not agree more with that sentiment. It's clear that Colonel Kim's commitment was to America first, and that is something that all Americans, especially elected officials, must always remember if America is to endure.

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After fighting in two wars and serving almost three decades, Colonel Kim's military service ended in 1972, however, his service to his community was just beginning. After his transition back into civilian life, Colonel Kim would go on to play a major role in the founding of important fixtures in his community including the Korean American Museum, the Korean American Coalition, and the Korean Health, Education, Information and Research Center. He also helped lead the Center for the Pacific Asian Family out of financial woes to become one of the largest women's shelters in Southern California.

While, sadly, the world lost Colonel Kim in 2005, his legacy endures through the impact of his contributions to both his community and his nation. I ask today that you cement his legacy even further by bestowing Colonel Young Oak Kim with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Thank you for your time and consideration of Colonel Kim.

Sincerely,



Rob Woodall
Member of Congress