Thank you for asking me to be here today, Senators.

The American public blamed the changes and uncertainties during the Vietnam era on our soldiers. When they came home, people spit on them in airports and they were greeted with bumper stickers which read: “Want to take a voyage to far off places, meet exotic people and kill them?” How must our Vietnam vets feel when they see current service members applauded and praised in airports?

While serving as a combat nurse in Vietnam at the 85th Evacuation Hospital in Quinhon, I realized that dying so far away from home was the biggest fear of our boys. Our soldiers in Vietnam only wanted to cherish the America of their dreams. When they opened their eyes in a hospital, just a tent or Quonset hut, to see an American nurse standing there, relief flooded their faces. Sometimes tears came to their eyes. All they knew was part of America was beside them, taking care of them. When they were told they had lost an arm or a leg or an eye, their first words were usually about home, about America. “Charlie can’t get me now and I’m going home” was a typical response.

One of the big lessons we learned from Vietnam was even if we hate a war, we can still love our warriors. The California Legislature has done a tremendous amount to help our veterans. The statutes you have passed are sensitive to their needs and often quite creative. I am honored to be here today. And I am thrilled that you want to do more.

I was appointed to the Superior Court by Gov. George Deukmejian in 1989 and nominated for the Court of Appeal by Gov. Gray Davis in 2000, where I presently sit. I was on the Judicial Council for three years, and on the executive board of the California Judges Association for another three.

In 2009, the Veterans’ Working Group for California Courts, to make sure the courts were ready, willing and able to implement veteran legislation. I am its chair. When we see an obstacle to veterans in the courts, we try to do take action. As examples, we authored the court form, MIL-100 to try to identify the veterans who are in our courts. We watch over legislation concerning veterans. We prevailed upon the California Department of Justice to change their computer program to help process the sealing of records the Legislature ordered.

Since 2010, I have served as a mentor in a Veterans Treatment Court, mostly to women but not always. I wrote an article about veterans’ courts for Vietnam Veterans of America, after which I received some letters from Vietnam vet/lifers in Soledad Prison. I wrote back to say, “you know, you are in a position to help other veterans who end up in prison.” Five years later, I received another letter from Soledad. The inmates were running a veterans’ clinic and formed IVVA, Incarcerated Vietnam Veterans of America. I was asked to come to the prison on Memorial Day and speak. It was nothing short of heartwarming during the flag ceremony to see these men who served their country in Vietnam and who are now serving life in prison. Half of them raised their hands in a military salute, and the other half held their hands over their hearts as their flag passed by.

That was the beginning of a group of volunteer lawyers who each volunteered to represent one Vietnam veteran as the man comes up for parole. Training was at a parole board facility last September 28. If requested, I have some observations about that training.

When I became aware that doctors with CDCR and the VA had developed a way to test for PTSD resulting from military service, I tried to figure out how to implement Dr. Scott Johnson’s idea of having veterans with PTSD returned to court for resentencing. Accordingly, I wrote to Secretary Kernan.

I have two other thoughts which are fertile ground for this committee’s consideration, which I have in writing. Briefly, one involves getting our aging Vietnam vets into treatment with CalVet and the V.A. *before* they appear before the parole board. They should have received that treatment decades ago. The other is education for California lawyers about veterans.