

Hmong Minnesotan's 50th Anniversary

Today, Minnesota is home to about 95,000 Hmong. Every Hmong family in Minnesota and across America comes with a war, refugee, and resettlement story.

The Year 2025 will mark 50 years of the Hmong migration to the State of Minnesota. The Hmong began arriving in the state after the conclusion of the Secret War in 1975 (or end of the Cold War Era in Southeast Asia).

The Hmong exodus began. The only escape route for the majority of them was through the Mekong River. The US-back Hmong soldiers who were left behind had to fend for themselves and their families as the communist Pathet Lao and NVA started persecuting them for being US allies in the war. Whereas, hundreds of thousands of Hmong soldiers and civilians perished during the war. Hundreds of thousands more fled Laos to Thailand. More than 100,000 Hmong were massacred by the enemies inside Laos. More than 10,000 had died by drowning while crossing the Mekong River to the Thai shore. This river was life-and-death to all the Hmong from their war-torn country of Laos who sought political haven in Thailand. The Hmong nicknamed the Mekong River as “the river of bloody tears”, or in Hmong, *tus dej kua muag ntsav*.

The Hmong were lived on the mountaintops, and only few knew how to swim: crossing the river was even more dangerous.

Although many Hmong lives were lost while crossing the Mekong River, many, many more lives were saved and eventually found refuge in the refugee camps in Thailand. This epic theme of crossing the Mekong River is embedded in our story, in our Hmong storycloth, or pajntaub, arts, and crafts.

This 50th Anniversary plays a significant part of our history from Laos to Minnesota. The funding we are asking for in this legislation is to support programs and initiatives to

- Educate the general public of the Hmong journey of coming to Minnesota
- Bring more constructive dialogues and deeper understanding between generations from this experience
- Connect families and their generational war and refugee experiences to the younger generations
- Bring unity across communities to share their immigrant and refugee stories
- Honor the sacrifices of veterans during the war