

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2101

September 17, 2005

Doua Thor
Executive Director
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
1628 16th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20009

Dear Doua and Friends:

I congratulate all of you at the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center on your 26th year anniversary of serving and advancing issues of importance to the Southeast Asian community, and I wish I could be there in person with you this evening. I extend my deepest appreciation to the Center for honoring my work supporting refugees.

The Center's long and impressive history is very inspiring. Throughout your 26 years, you've been a leading voice in the ongoing struggle to improve the lives of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans. The United States is a nation of immigrants. Over the years, millions of people from countries throughout the world, including all eight of my grandparents, have come to America to escape hardship and oppression and seek better lives for themselves and their children. My support for refugees and immigrants reflects my strong belief that the economy and culture of the United States have benefited enormously from the new ideas, traditions, innovations and diversity that immigrants and refugees have brought with them. America owes an immense debt to the hard work and dedication. As my brother Robert Kennedy said, "Our attitude toward immigration reflects our faith in the American ideal. We have always believed it possible for men and women who start at the bottom to rise as far as their talent and energy allow. Neither race nor place of birth should affect their chances."

Tonight, we celebrate the success of the Southeast Asian refugee resettlement program. We thank you, the Southeast Asian community, for the extraordinary contributions you have made to America. We are a far better country today because of you. Refugees from Southeast Asia came to America with a strong love of freedom and a strong commitment to democracy. They settled in many parts of the United States, establishing deep roots in their communities. Wherever they have come, they have made lasting contributions to the vitality and diversity of our communities and our nation. Young men and

women have excelled academically, and their parents have established thriving businesses.

The many successes of the Southeast Asian communities would not have been possible without the vital support of the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center and other dedicated organizations. We honor your commitment and we admire your ideals.

I thank you again for this great honor and I look forward to continuing to work with you on all the issues we care about so deeply. Today, more than ever, it is reassuring to know that you are here, stronger than ever, making a difference every day for the Southeast Asian community now and in years to come. Thank you for all you do so well.

With great respect and appreciation,

Sincerely,


Edward M. Kennedy