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IDAHO

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:

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INDIAN AFFAIRS

September 23, 2010

Chairman James E. Vick
Army Clemency and Parole Board
1901 South Bell Street
Arlington, VA 22202-4508

Dear Chairman Vick:

I write in support of granting parole for Sergeant Evan Vela, a constituent from the state of Idaho.

As you know, Sgt. Vela was convicted by a general court-martial in February 2008 for unpremeditated murder of an unarmed Iraqi male. The incident took place on May 11, 2007, outside Iskandariyah, Iraq – then located in an area called the “Triangle of Death.” He was sentenced to ten years in military prison, which he is currently serving at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth.

As I understand the facts of the case, Sgt. Vela followed an order from his superior on the reasonable premise that his unit's position would be compromised. Yet, he received the harshest punishment among the co-accused. In addition to conflicting accounts of the rules of engagement, there are a number of mitigating factors and extenuating circumstances in this case that make a compelling argument for a reduced sentence, and that I urge you to consider.

In my view, the final judgment in Sgt. Vela's case, and resulting sentence, called into question the standard evaluation of basic rules of engagement and accountability in the chain of command. The safety and success of our men and women in uniform would be seriously jeopardized if every service member was subject to the same scrutiny for their actions during combat as in Sgt. Vela's case. Furthermore, several high-ranking Iraqi officials attended the trial expressing a profound interest in the case, and I have voiced strong concerns over the opportunity this presented to influence the outcome of the case to Sgt. Vela's detriment. Such questions remain about whether Sgt. Vela received all the fairness and consideration one is entitled to in trial.

The people of Idaho are ready to welcome Sgt. Vela home. Housing is already arranged for Sgt. Vela in Burley, Idaho, where he will be surrounded by a large support network of friends and family members. In addition, Sgt. Vela has received a written job offer from a local construction company. I am confident

that the warm embrace and the deep respect for the military in the community will ensure a smooth transition.

As you review his case, I urge you to consider a parole for Sgt. Vela's and grant him the ability to continue service to his country as a civilian. I appreciate your attention and consideration of this request for parole for Sgt. Vela.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Crapo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Crapo
United States Senator