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HEAR OUR GRIEF: MINNESOTANS SAY NO TO HMONG GRAVE DESECRATIONS ON APRIL 24 AT THE STATE CAPITOL

April 18, 2006, Minneapolis, MN. On Monday April 24, 2006 students affiliated with the Human Rights Program at the University of Minnesota requesting immediate action by the Minnesota Congressional delegation on the matter of the desecration of Hmong graves at Wat Tham Krabok in Saraburi, Thailand are holding a Rally at the Capitol in support of a resolution. The Rally will begin at Noon in the Rotunda. Speakers will include the chief authors of the resolution, Representative John Lesch and Senator Mee Moua, along with Representative Cy Thao and the director of the Human Rights Program, Barbara Frey. Attendees should gather on the steps of the Capitol at 11:30am.

The students have been working on getting legislative action of this issue since it came to their attention in January, 2006. They have put in hundreds of hours into the "Hear Our Grief: Minnesotans Say NO to Grave Desecrations" campaign. The students are asking for the Thai government to take steps to halt further exhumations, to investigate the whereabouts of the remains that have been disinterred and to return those remains to family members.

The Human Rights Program and the office of State Senator Mee Moua have already hosted a letter writing session to the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on Religious Intolerance and Contemporary forms of Racism on March 2, 2006 for those family members affected by the exhumations. More than 400 people attended the event and student volunteers received more than 150 personal statements from survivors. The statements were sent to the United Nations experts on racism and on religious intolerance as well as to the office of the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice.

An informal Community gathering will take place after the Rally in Room 318 of the Capitol. Leaders of various religious and ethnic communities of the Twin Cities have been invited to show their support at the Capitol event. This gathering is open for all Minnesotans who say NO to the grave desecrations and would like to learn about or show support for this issue.