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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Deported US Veteran Returns to the US as a Lawful Permanent Resident after nearly 20 Years

Joaquin (Jack) Aviles a deported U.S. Marine veteran, is the first veteran to have his deportation overturned through Public Counsel’s Deported Veterans Project

LOS ANGELES, CA, August 29, 2019 – Today, Joaquin (Jack) Aviles, a deported US veteran, re-entered the United States after nearly 20 years of being separated from his family, including his two children. This victory comes just over a year after the state of California began directing funds to Public Counsel's Immigrant Rights Project to assist deported veterans like Jack. Jack is the first client of the Deported Veterans Project to successfully return to the United States.

Prior to being deported, Jack had lived in the US since he was 6 months old as a lawful permanent resident. Raised by a single father of three kids, he had a difficult upbringing and quickly learned the value of hard work. With dreams of one day becoming a law enforcement officer in his community, he joined the US Marine Corps in 1994. Later, he was convicted for firearm offenses and, in 2000 at age 24, he was removed from the country. He re-started his life in Mexico, where he became a leader in the movement to assist deported veterans as the co-director of the Deported Veterans Support House.

“Our oath of allegiance and our patriotic commitment to serve and die for our country should count for something. My dream was to someday protect and serve the innocent, which I still firmly believe in the right thing to do for any human being,” said Aviles. “This whole experience was very difficult to accept and understand how the country I had known and called home since I was a baby, could just discard me like that. Not one veteran deserves that.”

Years after his removal, the law changed, making it so that Jack's offenses could no longer serve as the basis for deporting a lawful permanent resident. Unfortunately, Jack wouldn't learn this until our team took on his case in August 2018. Last month, the Immigration Judge reopened Jack's case, vacated his removal order, and terminated proceedings.

Yesterday, almost a year ago to the day that Public Counsel met Jack, he attempted to cross the border, along with Public Counsel Deported Veterans Project Supervising Senior Staff Attorney Talia Inlender and Paralegal Ivan Medina. They were met with some
administrative barriers and told to come back the next morning. On Thursday, August 29th, at 6am, they tried again and succeeded.

“We’re excited to welcome Jack home today after so many years of wrongful exile,” said Talia Inlender, Supervising Senior Staff Attorney at Public Counsel. “We are keenly aware that many others who served the United States in uniform remain separated from their families despite their service. Our Deported Veterans Project is committed to bringing these men and women home.”

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About us:

Public Counsel is the nation’s largest pro bono law firm. Founded in 1970, Public Counsel strives to achieve three main goals: protect the legal rights of disadvantaged children; represent immigrants who have been the victims of torture, persecution, domestic violence, trafficking, and other crimes; and foster economic justice by providing individuals and institutions in underserved communities with access to quality legal representation. Through a pro bono model that leverages the talents and dedication of thousands of attorney and law student volunteers, along with an in-house staff of more than 75 attorneys and social workers, Public Counsel annually assists more than 30,000 families, children, immigrants, veterans, and nonprofit organizations and addresses systemic poverty and civil rights issues through impact litigation and policy advocacy. For more information, visit [www.publiccounsel.org](http://www.publiccounsel.org)