

# Dulashanti Testimony H.B. 2036

Tuesday 28 April, 2015

Committee, for the record, my name is Joel Dulashanti and I am a life member of the Military Order of Purple Heart

Chairman, Senator Boquist,

Senate President Courtney,

And other Honorable members of the Committee,

It is my honor to speak on behalf of the house legislature passed H.B. 2036. It'll also be my pleasure to answer any questions that you may, to the best of my ability after this testimony.

One year ago today, I landed in the Portland Metro for the first time ever in my life. Before then I had been around the world and pretty much all over the rest of America. Leaving the Army and staying at my retirement duty station, FT Benning, GA, I decided to go through the holidays of 2013 and round out the end of my lease on the house I lived in, in Midland, GA. It gave me the time that I needed to make an informed decision about where I wanted to move to and spend the rest of my life. Sure, I wanted to go home to Washington, D.C. and be with friends and family... the cost of living there though was way too high. Maybe I wanted to go to Hong Kong, and find a bungalow in SoHo, but to be honest moving internationally was a little over my head. I had two real options left: Chicago and Portland. Just so happened that in 2013 Chicago had more 90 degree days that summer than Atlanta did and I like mild, temperate weather. So I set out for Portland and a year ago today I arrived. I lived in a hotel for five (5) days (in Vancouver) before I found the house that I live in and am moving out of... but it goes to show somewhat how aggressive the housing market can be here.

There is nothing more exciting to me, in Oregon than to take a day trip to Bend and MT Bachelor, Newport, or to Florence and check out the sand dunes, go to Astoria and have dinner on the port, make a drive through the Sisters and watch their four-legged deer community hang out on the sidewalk next to local businesses like people don't exist, a Spring trip to MT Hood for Sno-Kona, which this year, was held last Saturday, 30 minute drive to the Columbia River Gorge to cool off and back, or heading down to Salem (Brewery Capitol of the World)... That doesn't include the many things that you can do as an activist or a sportsman within our states boundaries. One of the many things that I have grown a huge pride for as a transplant Oregonian, is that, in being from the East Coast originally, there is nothing in comparison when driving through rain forests, along snow-capped volcanoes, through the Gorge, and it's vast

expanse, along the coast, seeing the largest sand dunes in America. Waves crashing on amazing cliff formations in the ocean on the Southern Coast, and the sights that rival cliff formations in Southeast Asia. I am proud to be an Oregonian. But we lack in somewhat of an approach of trending legislation that the rest of the country is heavily involved in unless it deals with Same-sex rights or Marijuana. We end up not being the first, sometimes not even the middle, but the last people to participate. An approval of H.B. 2036 changes those tally marks and makes us a forerunner for veterans support. By completing the first border to border Interstate-5 National Purple Heart Trail to date. And by giving Oregon the first Persian Gulf GWOT memorial highway on the breathtaking US 101, in the nation. By the way, Our National Guard unit just redeployed home from Afghanistan.

I can speak for myself about H.B. 2036, as a former member of the U.S. military (probably the most recent in this room to come off of active duty), as an Afghanistan and Global War on Terrorism Veteran, as a Purple Heart Recipient, as an experienced and ranked Airborne Infantry U.S. Army sniper, but more importantly as a one year Oregonian and an American from the other side of the country. I can tell you what this bill represents to me, I have driven across the country, literally at least once in attempt to move here from FT Benning and I am a veteran that cares about veterans and I want more than anything else, for everyone in Oregon to be aware of veteran's sacrifices and to become more aware and technically prideful of their veterans.

H.B 2036, supports legislation allowing for the immediate approval to designate highways and Interstates through border to border crossings in Oregon to be declared Veterans Memorials. I can't think of any better place to have a Veteran's Memorial. It's not every day or every week that I visit a veteran's memorial park, but I am driving down a highway or even an interstate once a week. Every day that I work on this legislation and other local municipality legislation and even my advocacy for the veteran-pro legislation at the federal level, I become more inspired to visit the local-to-me veteran's memorials and parks.

Why? Because, as a veteran, I realize that pro-support of all given sacrifices extends further in to each park community through its citizens and their want to be a part of what has been given and put under sacrifice to our freedoms. Coming from a person whom, has been able to give so much, but not enough, I am, an above the knee amputee and a multiple injury combat veteran.

I have visited the Oregon Coast more than anywhere else in Oregon, and I am an Oregon Field Guide subscriber, so I do travel all throughout Oregon seeing the places that they report on and I contact the ones that are to transient for me to follow. The coast the coastline that we have is so amazingly beautiful... Can you imagine the numbers of people that visit it from around the world? What do you think will happen when they see a sign for Persian Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan Veterans memorial next to our stunning cliff sides? They will probably ask the same questions that I have answers for, having served in the Hindu Kush area of Afghanistan:

1. Oregon supports our most recent veterans.
2. Oregon Supports all of our veterans
3. Differentiating cities support our combat wounded veterans

4. And Oregon is the missing link to the first international border to border and National completion of Purple Heart Trail
5. How do I find veterans and thank them for their service?
6. Well, this is Oregon and we represent well enough to be found and we are doing great things for the community, and trying to help veterans that are in distress from post conflict of service and combat. It isn't pleasant and we understand that more than anything is the most important part of what we do, that's why I am officiated in to an organization I want to help people get through what I have gone through myself and I want to make sure that our voice is heard for things that matter to our heart.

As a member of the Oregon Department of a Congressionally Chartered Organization, Military Order of Purple Heart, I can tell you that this bill is a good bill with minimal funding impact. (Let's start the standard instead of riding on other state assemblies back) Let's be a first state to do something and...

I honestly believe that we have more politically aligned veterans than any other state... I have been across the country and back, and in places that I define more patriotic, there isn't a more politically well-versed grouping of individuals. Thank you for your time, I am available to answer any question. I will fortunately you get to have me around for a bit.