

**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 30**

**“Designates Oregon as a Purple Heart State”**

**To**

**OREGON HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES**

**By**

**LTC (RET) ALLAN R. “DICK” TOBIASON  
CHAIRMAN, BEND HEROES FOUNDATION**

**BEND, OREGON**

**May 27, 2015**

Chair Hoyle and Distinguished Committee Members.

I am Dick Tobiason, Chairman of the Bend Heroes Foundation, a non profit 501(c)(3) organization in Bend honoring veterans. I am a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel, Master Army Aviator and a 2 tour Vietnam veteran. I am a member of the American Legion, Bend Band of Brothers, Military Officers Association of America, Life Member Military Order of the Purple Heart, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Vietnam Veterans of America. I received the Purple Heart in Vietnam 48 years ago,

Bend Heroes Foundation's contact information is 1900 NE 3<sup>rd</sup> St, Suite 106 #205, Bend, OR 97701, 541 388-5591.

I am accompanied by Charles Upton, Commander of the Oregon Military Order of the Purple Heart and Joel Dulashanti, member of MOPH Chapter 72 in Portland. Commander Upton and Sgt. Dulashanti are also Purple Heart recipients.

It is an honor for me to testify before you in support of HCR 30 today, 2 days after Memorial Day when we honored our nation's 1.3 million fallen military veterans.

Related to HCR 30 is HB 2036. Bend Heroes Foundation requested HB 2036 that designates 4 new veterans' highways honoring WWI Veterans, Korean War Veterans, Purple Heart recipients and Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans with prominent highway signs. **Slide 1.**

HB 2036 was passed unanimously by the House and Senate and signed by Governor Brown last week – May 21. ODOT will soon begin installing the highway signs and bill sponsors for them – no taxpayer funds are involved.

Iraq Veteran Robert Walker, Afghanistan Veteran Joel Dulashanti and Vietnam Veteran and Department Commander Charles Upton, Department of American Legion's Keegan Hodges, Department of VFW's Dennis Guthrie and I testified in support of HB 2036.

Recognizing Bend Heroes Foundation's lead role in HB 2036, Joel Dulashanti asked me to request legislation that would designate Oregon as a Purple Heart State and that would complement the Purple Heart Trail on I-5 and the 9 and soon to be 13 Purple Heart Cities in Oregon. The 9

Purple Heart cities are: Albany, Medford, Salem, Beaverton, Redmond, Bend, Prineville, La Pine and Madras.

We thank Rep. John Huffman for promoting these honors in HCR 30 to Oregon's 21,000 veterans who were killed in action (KIA) or wounded (WIA) in combat during 5 major wars since WWI when the Purple Heart award became available. Rep. Huffman also spearheaded HB 2036.

What is the Purple Heart? **Slide 2** shows the current version of the Purple Heart medal and which several of us are wearing today.

Quoting from the National Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH):

"The Purple Heart is specifically a combat decoration and it is our nation's oldest military medal. It was first created by General George Washington in 1782 and was known as the Badge of Military Merit. It was first awarded to three soldiers in Newburgh, N.Y. The Badge of Military Merit was made of cloth and it is the predecessor of the Purple Heart medal.



The current Purple Heart medal was developed by General Douglas MacArthur in 1932. The new design was created by Miss Elisabeth Will, an Army heraldic specialist in the Office of the Quartermaster General. The revived form is of metal, instead of perishable cloth, made in the shape of a rich purple heart bordered with gold, with a bust of Washington in the center and the Washington coat-of-arms at the top.



The Purple Heart is awarded to members of the armed forces of the U.S who are wounded by an instrument of war in the hands of the enemy and posthumously to the next of kin in the name of those who are killed in action or die of wounds received in action. The heritage it represents is sacred to those who understand the price paid to wear it."

Mr. Robert D. Maxwell of Bend is a Director of Bend Heroes Foundation and at age 94 is our nation's oldest living Medal of Honor recipient. He also received 2 Purple Hearts and 2 Silver Stars during WWII. Mr. Maxwell's health precludes him from testifying today. He is very pleased that the Oregon legislature is considering Oregon as a Purple Heart State. On Memorial Day, Mr. Maxwell asked me to urge this distinguished Committee to vote in favor of HCR 30.

Approximately 1.8 million Purple Heart medals have been awarded to our nation's combat veterans since WWI or about 1 out of every 25 (4%) of the

estimated 44 million veterans who have served our nation. We estimate 21,000 of them are Oregonians. Three members of “Bravo” Troop, 1/82 Cav received Purple Heart awards earlier this month after returning from Afghanistan. There are an unknown number of recipients like Robert Maxwell, Joel Dulashanti and me who moved to Oregon from other states and who are not counted in the 21,000 statistic.

Statistics on Oregon’s war casualties are displayed in [slide 3](#).

A Purple Heart State designation over arches all wars beginning with WWI. So it would be appropriate to think about installing Oregon Purple Heart State markers at major Oregon veterans’ memorials: WWII Memorial on the State Capitol grounds and Vietnam Memorial in Portland.

Installing a marker in the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs memorial park in Salem would honor our oldest veterans of WWI, Korean War veterans and our youngest war casualties from the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq wars as there are memorials there honoring veterans of those wars.

Veterans would seek approval from memorial managers to install markers and raise all the necessary funds to fabricate and install Oregon Purple Heart State markers.

[Slide 4](#) is our initial concept of the Oregon Purple Heart State marker.

As HCR 30 states, there are 14 Purple Heart States in our nation. They were designated by state legislators beginning 4 years ago with California becoming the first. It would be a grand honor to add Oregon to the growing list of Purple Heart States.

I respectfully request House Committee on Rules to vote in favor of HCR 30.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HCR 30.

I would be pleased to respond to any questions.