

9 March 2017

House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness.
900 Court St. NE, H178
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Evans, Vice Chair Boone and Vice Chair Esquivel,

Reference testimony on HP 2880.

My name is Jason Carroll. I am a combat veteran with four years of service in Vietnam and service in Korea and Somalia. Since the Vietnam War, the POW/MIA issue has been of importance to me. I am a member of Molalla Post 3973 Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. For the past 15 years Post 3973 has conducted one of the premiere POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremonies in the State. I am honored to have had the lead on planning and conducting those ceremonies. These ceremonies are conducted at the Molalla Veterans Memorial located in a City Park with the support of the Fire District. With the cooperation of the City, VFW Post 3973 insures that a POW/MIA flag flies over this Memorial every day. Most schools in the area have Veterans Day programs on or around Veterans Day. These programs are to honor veterans but more importantly they are an educational experience for the students. Two of the larger programs, Colton High School and Molalla Middle School always include a special tribute to POW/MIA's. VFW Post 3973 Auxiliary visits 5th grade class rooms in the area and distributes a small POW/MIA flag to each student. All these programs to honor and remember ex POWs and MIA could not be accomplished without the cooperation and support of the City, the schools and the fire district. The mandate proposed in HP 2880 will not be helpful to the support shown by local governments in these POW/MIA programs.

A flag normally is used to identify those that fly it with a government or an organization. The POW/MIA flag is different, it is a memorial flag to honor and remember POWs, ex POWs and MIA. This memorial and display of honor from local communities is empty and meaningless when mandated by State government. Communities throughout the State have built and maintain Veterans Memorials to honor and remember the service of veterans. Most of these memorials honor all veterans. These memorials are frequently built on publicly owned land with private funds. Many of these memorials are beautiful and impressive. My favorite is in Central Point although those in Newport and North Bend that overlook the Pacific Ocean are fantastic. These memorials were built without a State mandate and reflect the true respect and honor from the communities that built them.

The 83,000 Americans listed as missing in action and unaccounted-for and the 138,000 service members once held as prisoners of war from our nation's wars going back to the beginning of World War II deserve recognition. This recognition is already displayed in numerous ways. They are honored with all veterans at veteran's memorials in almost every community in the State as well as veteran's memorials near this building. In addition, the 3rd Friday of every September is National POW/MIA Recognition Day that generates special ceremonies around the State. Many VFW and American Legion Posts and local communities choose to display the POW/MIA flag. All this is done without a government mandate. In addition, ORS 186.110 requires State buildings and county courthouses to display the POW/MIA flag. US Post Offices display the POW/MIA flag on selected holidays.

Since the beginning of WW II there have been over 500,000 American service members killed in action. Should the State mandate a KIA flag at every school and fire district? The answer is no. The State should not mandate local governments to the display any memorial flag.

Forcing local communities to display the POW/MIA flag is not an effective way to honor POW's and MIA. It could be counter-productive to community cooperation and support of veteran's groups POW/MIA programs. There is a limit on the good will for veteran's issues. Please do not use that good will on in-effective mandates. We should use that good will on important issues like Measure 96 funding. I strongly recommend that those governments listed in paragraph (3) (d) of HP 2880 be removed from the required category and placed in a recommended category or be removed entirely from the statute.

Thank you to the committee members for your support of and dedication to veteran's.



Jason Carroll
20138 S. Hwy 211
Colton, OR 97017
jc@fellowsfarms.com