

TESTIMONY

HCR 1

“Designates certain cities as Medal of Honor communities or cities”

To

OREGON HOUSE RULES COMMITTEE

By

DICK TOBIASON
CHAIRMAN, BEND HEROES FOUNDATION

And

ROBERT D. MAXWELL
DIRECTOR, BEND HEROES FOUNDATION

February 16, 2017

Chair Williamson 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 and first responders. I am a retired Army Lieutenant Colonel and a 2 tour Vietnam veteran and member of the American Legion, Military Officers Association of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Vietnam Veterans of America.

I am accompanied by WWII Army Veteran Technician 5th Grade Mr. Robert D. "Bob" Maxwell of Bend, our nation's oldest living Medal of Honor recipient and the only recipient living in Oregon. Mr. Maxwell is a Director of Bend Heroes Foundation.

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

It is an honor for us to testify to you today in support of HCR 1.

HB 2100 designating Interstate - 5 and Interstate - 205 as the Oregon Medal of Honor Highway is a necessary companion to HCR 1 and the vehicle for requiring ODOT to install Medal of Honor City/Community markers in or near the 11 cities/communities listed in HCR 1. We will testify to the House Veterans and Emergency Preparedness Committee on HB 2100, HCR 9 and HCR 10 after this hearing.

We thank Representative John Huffman and Senator Tim Knopp for their leadership sponsoring HCR 1 and HB 2100 and previous legislation honoring veterans with memorial highways across Oregon.

Bend Heroes Foundation requested HCR 1 and HB 2100 to complete the concept we envisioned 12 years ago that would honor Oregon's half million war veterans and Oregon's 26 recipients of the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest award for military valor above and beyond the call of duty. To receive this award, the recipient had to have risked his life to save others during war. More than half of our nation's 3498 recipients died as a result of their unselfish and courageous acts of heroism saving others.

Mr. Maxwell was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism during WWII when he saved his 3 comrades from certain death by hurling himself on a

German hand grenade thrown into their midst on September 7, 1944 in Besancon, France. He also received 2 Silver Stars, a Bronze Star, 2 Purple Hearts, French Croix de Guerre and French Legion of Honor during WWII.

Oregon's 26 Medal of Honor recipients earned the medal during 8 wars in 10 countries over 108 years beginning with the Civil War and ending with the Vietnam War.

The honors to these war heroes, future recipients and any Medal of Honor recipient traveling in Oregon would be accomplished with the installation of ODOT- approved "**Oregon Medal of Honor Highway**" signs on I-5 and I-205 (HB 2100) and "**Medal of Honor City/Community**" markers in or near 11 cities across Oregon (HCR 1).

(Slides 1 - 4): Oregon Hwy and City Maps, 2 City signs

The 11 "**Medal of Honor City/Community**" cities named in HCR 1 and HB 2100 were selected on the basis of where the Medal of Honor recipient entered military service, lived after receipt of the award or where they were laid to rest. The following cities meet that criteria:

Agness, Bend, Corvallis, Eugene, Hood River, Jordan Valley, Medford, Richland, Portland, Salem and The Dalles.

Some of the markers will display more than one name –

1 name: Agness, Bend, Corvallis, Hood River, Medford, Richland, Jordan Valley

2 names: Eugene, Salem

3 names: The Dalles

12 names: Portland

Here is a breakdown of Oregon's 26 MOH recipients:

(Slide 5): Spreadsheet of recipients by wars

Oregon's 26 Medal of Honor recipients earned the medal during 8 wars in 10 countries over 108 years beginning with the Civil War and ending with the Vietnam War. Attached is a list of the recipients, their wars and the 11 Oregon cities with which they are connected.

No other state has honored all of its Medal of Honor recipients with signs or markers in or near their community. We could find only one such

designation in our nation. Gainesville, Texas was named Medal of Honor Host City.

If enacted into law HCR 1 will create another first in our nation - a Medal of Honor City or Community for every Medal of Honor recipient connected with their state.

We requested specific language in HB 2100 requiring display of all 3 Medal of Honor medals on the signs and markers.

(Slide 6): Images of 3 MOHs

Beyond honoring Medal of Honor recipients, our objective is to educate the public on the history and uniqueness of the Medal of Honor as the medal is indeed a very rare award and seen by very few. As there are only 77 MOH recipients from all wars living in our nation today including Mr. Maxwell, it is rare indeed that the public will ever personally meet a recipient. Of the 40 million veterans who have served our nation, only 1 in 12,000 were awarded the Medal of Honor.

As we did for the 6 veterans memorial highways in the past, we would work with ODOT on the design and locations of the markers. Note that these markers are not necessarily highway signs. We would need the flexibility of using materials and designs that would fit the particular environment where the markers will be installed. In some cases we will seek approval to install **“Medal of Honor City”** markers at certain veterans’ memorials, e.g., Willamette National Cemetery, Oregon State University, Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs property, etc.

As in the past, we would raise the necessary funds – about \$25,000 to implement HB 2100 and HCR 1 - HCR 1 would be about \$15,000.

We thank the Committee for this opportunity to testify in support of HCR 1.

Mr. Maxwell and I would be pleased to respond to your comments and questions.

POWER POINT SLIDES

1. Map of Oregon Medal of Honor Highway,
2. Map of 11 MOH cities
3. Portland MOH City sign
4. Bend MOH City sign
5. Spreadsheet of MOH recipients by wars
6. MOH medals

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