

TESTIMONY ON

HB 2100

“Relating to highways ...”

HCR 9

“Recognizes and honors Technician Fifth Grade Robert Dale Maxwell..”

HCR 10

“Commends Bend Heroes Foundation...”

To

OREGON HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS’ SERVICES AND
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

By

DICK TOBIASON
CHAIRMAN, BEND HEROES FOUNDATION

And

ROBERT D. MAXWELL
DIRECTOR, BEND HEROES FOUNDATION

February 16, 2017

Chairman Evans 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 HB 2100 (Medal of Honor Highway), HCR 9 (Honoring Robert D, Maxwell) and HCR 10 (Commending Bend Heroes Foundation).

Earlier today we testified to the House Rules Committee on HCR 1 which would designate 11 Oregon cities as "Medal of Honor City or Community". HB 2100 is the vehicle which would require ODOT to install signs on Interstates 5 and 205 and markers in or near the 11 Medal of Honor Cities defined in HCR 1 and HB 2100. Thank you for consolidating the hearings.

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. We also thank Representative Knute Buehler for sponsoring HCR 9 and HCR 10.

Two years ago on Feb. 5, 2015, I testified to this committee in support of HB 2036 designating 3 more border to border highways honoring Oregon's war veterans on US 101, US 395 and Interstate 5. Bend Heroes Foundation requested that legislation and this Committee unanimously supported it as did your counterpart committee in the Senate and the full Oregon House and Senate.

I am very pleased to tell you that HB 2036 has been fully implemented with the installation of 32 signs on these highways at a cost of about \$28,000 – all raised by veterans:

(Slide 1):

Thus, our vision of honoring Oregon's nearly one-half million veterans who served, the 6,022 who died and the 15,000 who were wounded during 5 major wars over the last 100 years has been accomplished with the installation of 67 signs on 5 major border-to-border highways across Oregon. All together we raised about \$70,100 to fund 67 signs on 5 highways.

(Slides 2 – 8):

We enjoyed an outstanding relationship with Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) designing and installing the signs. ODOT designated a project manager to work with us across its many Districts.

Bend Heroes Foundation requested HB 2100 and HCR 1 to complete the concept we envisioned 12 years ago that would honor Oregon's nearly half million war veterans and Oregon's 26 recipients of the Congressional 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 or her life to save others during war. More than half of our nation's 3498 recipients died as a result of their unselfish and courageous act 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.

(Slide 9):

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 308 miles

of I-5 and I-205 between Oregon's borders with Washington and California (HB 2100) and "**Medal of Honor City or Community**" markers in or near 11 cities across Oregon (HCR 1).

(Slides 10 - 14):

While at least 12 states have Medal of Honor highways, they are short in length and were dedicated to a few of the State's MOH recipients – not all of the state's recipients as we propose in HB 2100. Thus, Oregon would be setting another first in the nation precedent honoring veterans.

The 11 "**Medal of Honor City/Community**" cities 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 would 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

We have found only 1 city in our nation that was designated Medal of Honor City – Gainesville, Texas.

Bend Heroes Foundation created the Oregon Medal of Honor Exhibit at Evergreen Air & Space Museum in McMinnville. We dedicated the exhibit on Mr. Maxwell's 95th birthday – October 25, 2015. The exhibit honors 26 Medal of Honor recipients connected with Oregon and who 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 cities in Oregon with which they are connected.

(Slides 15 – 18):

If enacted into law, HB 2100 and HCR 1 will create two more firsts in our nation: a 308 mile border to border highway honoring all of the State's

Medal of Honor recipients, any future recipients and a Medal of Honor City or Community for every Medal of Honor recipient connected with Oregon.

We requested specific language in both bills requiring display of all 3 Medal of Honor medals on the signs.

(Slide 19):

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 Medal of Honor recipients from all wars living in our nation including Mr. Maxwell, it is rare indeed that the public will ever personally meet a recipient. Of the 42 million veterans who have served our nation, only 1 in 12,000 were awarded the Medal of Honor.

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society was chartered by Congress in 1958. We believe HB 2100 and HCR 1 support the Society's goals:

To protect, uphold and preserve the dignity and honor of the medal at all times and on all occasions.

To serve our country in peace as we did in war.

To inspire and stimulate our youth to become worthy citizens of our country.

To foster and perpetuate Americanism.

As we did for the 6 veterans memorial highways, we would work with ODOT on the design and locations of the signs. 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 memorial park, City of Medford's Veterans Memorial Park, etc.

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

We also support HCR 9 and HCR 10 honoring Mr. Robert Maxwell and commending Bend Heroes Foundation. In support of HCR 9 and HCR 10, I have submitted a report of the 35 Bend Heroes Foundation projects valued at almost \$900,000 completed over the last 12 years. Mr. Maxwell is a Director of the Foundation and has inspired us all to act. Mr. Maxwell and

the Foundation deserve special recognition for their many years of dedication to honoring Oregon's veterans and serving without pay.

While we are here, Mr. Maxwell and I would like to briefly inform the Committee of the status of the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation's "**Character Development Program**" – "CDP" as we call it.

CDP *"is a resource designed by teachers to provide students with opportunities to explore the important concepts of courage, commitment, sacrifice, patriotism, integrity, and citizenship and how these values can be exemplified in daily life."* CDP was implemented this year at Bend Senior High School and its feeder school High Desert Middle School. Approximately 110 teachers from those 2 schools were trained at no cost to tax payers by Medal of Honor Foundation teachers. The Bend area teachers report enthusiastic response from students. More High School Principals in Central Oregon have shown an interest in implementing CDP.

Mr. Maxwell has been the driving force for implementing CDP in Oregon.

Hopefully we will see legislation in the near future encouraging implementation of CDP across Oregon as 40 other states have already done.

We just wanted to let this Committee know about CDP as it also relates to HB 2100 and HCR 1 - veterans and the Medal of Honor.
(Slides 20, 21):

In conclusion, Bend Heroes Foundation wholeheartedly supports HB 2100, HCR 1, HCR 9 and HCR 10. If enacted into law, HB 2100 and HCR 1 will educate the traveling public, historians and students about the service and sacrifice of Oregon's most highly decorated war heroes over 100 plus years and complete our 12 years of work on an integrated Oregon veterans memorial highway system.

We thank the Committee for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2100, HCR 9 and HCR 10.

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

POWER POINT SLIDES

1. Map of Oregon's 5 Veterans highways
- 2–8. Photos of signs on 5 Veterans highways
9. Spreadsheet of Medal of Honor recipients by wars
10. Map of Oregon Medal of Honor Highway
11. Oregon Medal of Honor Highway sign
12. Map of Oregon 11 Medal of Honor cities
13. Portland Medal of Honor City sign
14. Bend Medal of Honor City sign
15. Oregon Medal of Honor Exhibit overall
16. History of Medal of Honor
17. World map of Oregon Medal of Honor actions
18. Maxwell/Kingsley plaques at Oregon Medal of Honor Exhibit
19. 3 Medal of Honor medals
20. CDP training class
21. Robert Maxwell with CDP teachers

2-15-17 7:15 am