

Committee on Memorials and Remembrance

"To Memorialize casualties of war and Remember the service of Military Veterans"

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Testimony on HB2195 – February 19, 2019
House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Chair Evans, Vice Chair Meek, Vice Chair Lewis and Committee Members,

I wish to thank the Interim Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness for sponsoring this bill. I wish to share with you my gratitude for hearing HB2195 today.

50 years ago today, over 500,000 United States military personnel were deployed to Vietnam. The New Year of 1969 brought many of the same experiences of 1968. 1968 was the year of the greatest number of casualties during the Vietnam War. Almost 3 million warriors served in Vietnam. Thousands were from Oregon. All totaled, there were over 58,000 American troops who died in Vietnam; 710 of them were Oregonians.

These were the sons and daughters of the Greatest Generation. The Vietnam generation of warriors went to war and served their country well. Yet, when they returned from serving their nation, they did not get a Thank You, let alone a "Welcome Home".

The era of the Vietnam War was a tumultuous time. There was strife and discord. The Vietnam Era Veterans were treated poorly; spit upon, verbally rebuked and on many occasions physically attacked, for wearing a military uniform and serving their country. During the ensuing decades, the Vietnam Era Veterans, and their service to our country, were essentially ignored.

In our Oregon State Capitol building, you can find a memorial to the veterans of the Civil War.

A Committee of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 271

Committee Members:
Steve Bates, Steve Wiley, Bert Key, Ron Ruedi

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In our state capital city of Salem, on state properties, there are memorials honoring the Veterans of the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II, Korean War and the Afghan- Iraqi wars.

Many Oregon communities have a local monument, memorial or park to honor their veterans and war dead. Some communities have honored their local Vietnam War heroes with separate Vietnam War memorials.

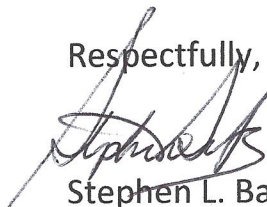
Yet, in our state capital city, there is not a statewide monument or memorial honoring our Vietnam War Veterans. The states of California and Washington erected memorials on their capitol grounds to honor their Vietnam Veterans and collectively say "Welcome Home". It is time for the state of Oregon to do the same.

Passage of HB2195 with the -1 amendment is the start. Setting aside space on the Capitol Grounds for a Vietnam War Memorial and establishing a Task Force to see that a Vietnam War Memorial is built shows the Vietnam Era Veterans that we do really care!

Please move this bill on to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means with a Do Pass Recommendation.

Let's get this done! Albeit decades late, Let's say "Welcome Home" to our Vietnam Vets.

Respectfully,



Stephen L. Bates

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