

Committee on Memorials and Remembrance

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

Stephen L. Bates, Chair
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Testimony on House Concurrent Resolution 204 Honoring John Noble Holcomb (1946-1968)
House Rules Committee – February 15, 2022

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chair Breeze-Iverson, Vice Chair Fahey and Committee Members,

First, I wish to thank Chair Smith Warner for the special dispensation to introduce this resolution in this session. I also wish to acknowledge Representative Owens and his office staff for their efforts.

About a month ago, I was contacted by VFW District Commander John Duggan, who lives in the Halfway/Richland area of Baker County. He asked how to establish a Fallen Hero Memorial Highway. I advised Commander Duggan that the state legislature must first honor the fallen hero with a resolution and then ODOT would help identify the location of a Fallen Hero Memorial Highway sign.

We proceeded to prepare a draft resolution and submitted it to Representative Owens. Again, I am grateful for all who were involved to see that this resolution was introduced this year.

John Noble Holcomb was born and raised in Baker County. He graduated from Eagle Valley High School in 1964 and joined the US Army in 1966 while living in Corvallis.

John Holcomb achieved the rank of Sergeant in 1968 and was assigned to Vietnam. His tour of duty in Vietnam started in March, 1968.

Later that year on December 3rd, Sergeant Holcomb was leading his squad when they and other squads were attacked by the enemy near Quan Loi Base Camp in Binh Long Province. He led his squad with bravery and when the machine gunner was knocked out, Sergeant Holcomb seized the machine gun and ran to the forward edge of the position and repelled the enemy. As the enemy retreated, Sergeant Holcomb gathered his men and moved the wounded to a position of safety. As other squad leaders were among the wounded, Sergeant Holcomb acted as the platoon leader and reorganized the defensive sector despite a raging grass fire which had been ignited by the incoming mortars.

The enemy attacked again. Sergeant Holcomb and his men did their best to defend their position and repel the enemy once more. Sergeant Holcomb was severely wounded when he was hit by a mortar which took out his machine gun. As the enemy retreated, Sergeant Holcomb crawled through the grass fire to rescue and move the wounded to an area of safety despite his own injuries.

The enemy returned. Sergeant Holcomb was able to reach a radio and call in for assistance. Friendly support arrived and repelled the enemy for the third time.

A Committee of Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 392

Committee Members:

Steve Bates, Steve Wiley, Bert Key, Ron Ruedi

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Page 2 – Testimony on House Concurrent Resolution 204 Honoring John Noble Holcomb (1946-1968)
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Sergeant John Noble Holcomb died later that day from his wounds in a field hospital in Phuoc Long Province, Republic of South Vietnam.

Sergeant Holcomb repelled the enemy not once, not twice, but three times. In doing so, he sustained life ending injuries and wounds while saving his fellow soldiers.

In 1971, Sergeant John Holcomb was awarded the Medal of Honor. His parents, who lived in Richland, Oregon travelled to Washington, DC and the Medal of Honor was presented to them by President Richard Nixon.

Sergeant Holcomb is a true hero and deserves to be honored with a Fallen Hero Memorial Highway.

It is suggested that State Highway 86 be so designated near Richland, Oregon which is the hometown and burial place of Sergeant John Noble Holcomb.

With this stated, we request that this committee move this resolution to the House Floor with a Do Pass Recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephen L. Bates, Chair

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