

Submitter: Zack Gallinger-Long

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General
Government, and Veterans

Measure: HB3000

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Tran, and members of the Committee,

My name is Zack Gallinger-Long and I am the brother of Navy Hospitalman Riley Gallinger-Long, who was killed in action on August 11, 2011, while serving in the Marsha District of the Helmand Province of Afghanistan.

As a gold star family member, I know what it means to get that knock at the door. To learn, in an instant, that you have lost a brother, that a wife is now a widow, parents have lost a child, and, from this point forward, every day of your life will be tinted a shade slightly different than you had ever imagined. You are now a part of a club no one wants to join, with a grief that no one wants to bear.

But I could never allow the story to end there. Not for Riley, nor for any of the other men and women who laid down their lives in service to this nation.

Shortly after Riley's passing, I worked to establish Veterans Memorial Park in our hometown of Cornelius, Oregon. Over a two year process, we installed a life-size battlefield cross, several memorial benches, a flagpole, and granite wall engraved with names of all the men and women from Washington County who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

I take pride in honoring the memory of my brother as well as ALL the men and women who chose to serve, no matter the cost. When I see a Fallen Hero roadside memorial sign or a gold star license plate, I'm reminded that there's another family equally proud of the their fallen heroes' legacy and wanting to keep that person's memory alive and to honor that sacrifice.

One of the best ways I can think to honor the sacrifices of the fallen is to continue to serve with the same level of commitment and dedication that they would have. To never stop asking what else can I do? Where else can I serve? How can I make a difference? And that's why I'm here today. To continue making a difference for others, for gold star families, on behalf of my brother, in memory of his sacrifice, and in honor of his legacy.

I urge your support for House Bill 3000 and House Bill 3001, thank you for your time today.

Gold Star Brother
Zack Gallinger-Long