

**OREGON HONORS 480,000 WARTIME VETERANS
& 6,000 GOLD STAR FAMILIES
WITH SIGNS ON 9 MAJOR HIGHWAYS ACROSS OREGON**

During the last 14 years, the non-profit Bend Heroes Foundation was successful in requesting the Oregon legislature and Oregon’s Governors to adopt 5 laws honoring nearly one-half million Oregon veterans who served during 5 major wars: **WWI, WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq Wars.**

Slightly over 6,000 veterans from Oregon made the supreme sacrifice, an estimated 15,000 Oregonians were wounded and over 920 veterans and civilians became Prisoners of War (POWs) during those wars. One thousand (1,000) Oregonians (999 veterans and 1 civilian) still remain Missing in Action (MIA) from WWI to the Vietnam War. Twenty nine (29) Medal of Honor recipients (Civil War to Vietnam) have close ties with Oregon. The 6,022 war dead left 6,022 Gold Star Families behind.

The honors to Oregon’s 479,800 wartime veterans were accomplished by 97 large (4 ft. x 8 ft. or 6 ft. X 8 ft.) signs installed by Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and others on 8 border-to-border highways and a short highway totaling 3,011 miles in length across Oregon. The first sign was installed in 2010 and the last in 2022. Each border to border highway displays 10 -18 signs with half facing in each direction. The 8 major highways range in length from 292 miles to 471 miles. On average, highway travelers will view a sign every 65 miles.

The 9 Veterans’ highways are:

WWI Veterans Memorial Highway.....	10 signs on U.S. Hwy 395
WWII Veterans Historic Highway.....	18 signs on U.S. Hwy 97/S.R. 126
Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway.....	4 signs on SR 35
Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway.....	10 signs on Interstate 5
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway.....	17 signs on Interstate 84
Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq Veterans Memorial Highway.....	11 signs on U.S. Hwy 101
Purple Heart Trail.....	5 signs on Interstate 5
Oregon Medal of Honor Highway.....	12 signs on U.S. Hwy 20
POW/MIA Memorial Highway.....	10 signs on U.S. Hwy 26

A map displaying the 8 border to border and SR 35 highways is attached. Five highway are “firsts in the USA.”

The 292 mile **WWII Veterans Historic Highway** is the first highway to honor WWII veterans as well as inform travelers of 8 nearby WWII training sites. The **Purple Heart Trail** on Oregon’s 308 mile long I-5 connects with California’s and Washington’s Purple Heart Trails on Interstate 5 thereby creating the first Purple Heart Trail spanning our nation in any direction as well as between Canada and Mexico. Likewise, the 338 mile long border-to-border **Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq Veterans Memorial Highway** along the beautiful Oregon coast on U.S.

Hwy 101 is another first in our nation. And the 451 mile border to border **Oregon Medal of Honor Highway** along U.S. Hwy 20 is our 4th “first in the nation” highway. The 471 mile **POW/MIA Memorial Highway** along U.S. Hwy 26 is the 5th “first in the nation” highway. At the Foundation’s request, Idaho has designated its 401 mile U.S. Hwy 26 as POW/MIA Memorial Highway. The Foundation has requested the **National League of POW/MIA Families** to extend that highway across the USA. The Oregon POW/MIA Memorial and Oregon Medal of Honor Highways intersect with all the war highways.

Crossing the other war highways is the 451 mile **Oregon Medal of Honor Highway** honoring 29 Medal of Honor recipients connected with Oregon who acted with “*conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty at the risk of his life*” during combat with an enemy of the United States thus receiving our nation’s highest award for military valor during 8 wars over a 108 year period (Civil War to Vietnam War).

Since completion of the **Oregon Medal of Honor Highway** almost 5 years ago, Bend Heroes Foundation has coordinated the designation of 11 more state Medal of Honor Highways across America on U.S. Highway 20, the longest highway in the nation and stretching 3,365 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean between Newport, OR and Boston, MA.

All 11 states east of Oregon have adopted the Oregon precedent, thus completing the coast to coast highway and first veterans west - east highway on the longest continuous highway across our nation on Nov. 17, 2022. See attached map. The 12 states account for about 62% of all 3,516 Medal of Honor awards presented to recipients from all 50 states since the Civil War. The remaining 38 states account for about 38% of all 3,515 recipients and are not honored on US Hwy 20 but should be.

Bend Heroes Foundation and team mates have requested the U.S. Congress to designate US Hwy 20 as the **National Medal of Honor Highway** honoring all 3,516 recipients from all 50 states and territories and all future recipients. That highway would overlay the **Medal of Honor Highway Across** America and run parallel to the coast to coast Lincoln and Eisenhower Highways designated by Congress.

Oregon’s 8 veterans’ highway signs were funded by veterans’ groups, Boards of County Commissions, civic organizations, several non-profits, businesses, and individuals. Bend Heroes Foundation and its partners raised over \$110,000 to pay Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and others to fabricate and install 93 honorific signs across Oregon. The Japanese - American community funded the 4 Nisei Highway signs. The replacement cost would be over \$200,000. No state highway funds were used.

A map of Oregon and photos of signs on each highway are shown below. Note the display of the familiar **Purple Heart** and **Medal of Honor** Medals and **POW/MIA** logo on highway signs.

Now that Oregon's wartime veterans have been honored with the 8 border to border highways, Bend Heroes Foundation has submitted draft legislation to the Oregon Legislature to designate the 477 mile US Hwy 30 between Astoria and Idaho as "**Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway**" honoring the families of the 6,022 Oregon veterans who perished during 5 major wars since WWI. In response to the request, the Legislature issued House Bill 2146 that would designate U.S. Hwy 30 as "**Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway**".

The undersigned testified to the Oregon House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government and Veterans in support of HB 2146 on January 19. The Committee voted unanimously in support of HB 2146-1 on Jan. 26. The House of Representatives also voted unanimously in favor of the highway on Feb. 2. The process will soon repeat in the Senate.

Assuming the Legislature and Governor approve the **Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway**, Bend Heroes Foundation and its many partners will have honored Oregon's 480,000 wartime veterans and over 6,000 Gold Star Families with 103 highway signs installed across 3,447 miles of highway within Oregon. Adding 100 state Medal of Honor Highway signs along the 3,365 mile **Medal of Honor Highway Across America** through 12 states on US Hwy 20 brings the total to 203 signs on 6,812 miles of highways.

As U.S. Hwy 30 spans the USA between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, there is the possibility of a **Gold Star Families Memorial Highway Across America** following the **Medal of Honor Highway Across America** precedent set by the Foundation and its partners. To that end, the Foundation has recommended the national leaders of the American Gold Star Mothers, Gold Star Wives of America, and America's Gold Star Families along U.S. Hwy 30 consider advocating state by state highway legislation across America.

Bend Heroes Foundation was 1 of 3 groups requesting the Oregon Legislature to honor Oregon's WWII Nisei Veterans with highway signs on the 41 mile SR 35 between the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway on I-84 and the POW/MIA Memorial Highway on US Hwy 26. SB 1509 was unanimously passed by both chambers and signed by Governor Brown on August 5. Four **Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway** signs were dedicated on August 13, 2022. Two historic information markers will be installed along the highway at a future date.

Almost 90 Blue Star Memorial Highway signs (photo attached) have been installed along Oregon's major highways (mostly in rest stops) by the Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. and ODOT. The Foundation has requested the Garden Club to add US Hwy 20, US Hwy 26, US Hwy 395 and SR 35. The number of Blue Star Highway signs almost equals the number of war veterans highway signs and honor both "peacetime" and "wartime" veterans.

Oregon's Legislators, Governors, Department of Transportation, and many patriotic donors have made this 14 year and counting project a reality.

It has been a high honor and privilege leading this legacy project (9 highways) honoring Oregon's veterans and Gold Star Families. **They will not be forgotten.**

Dick Tobiason

Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation,
a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization located in Bend, Oregon
<https://www.facebook.com/bendheroes/>

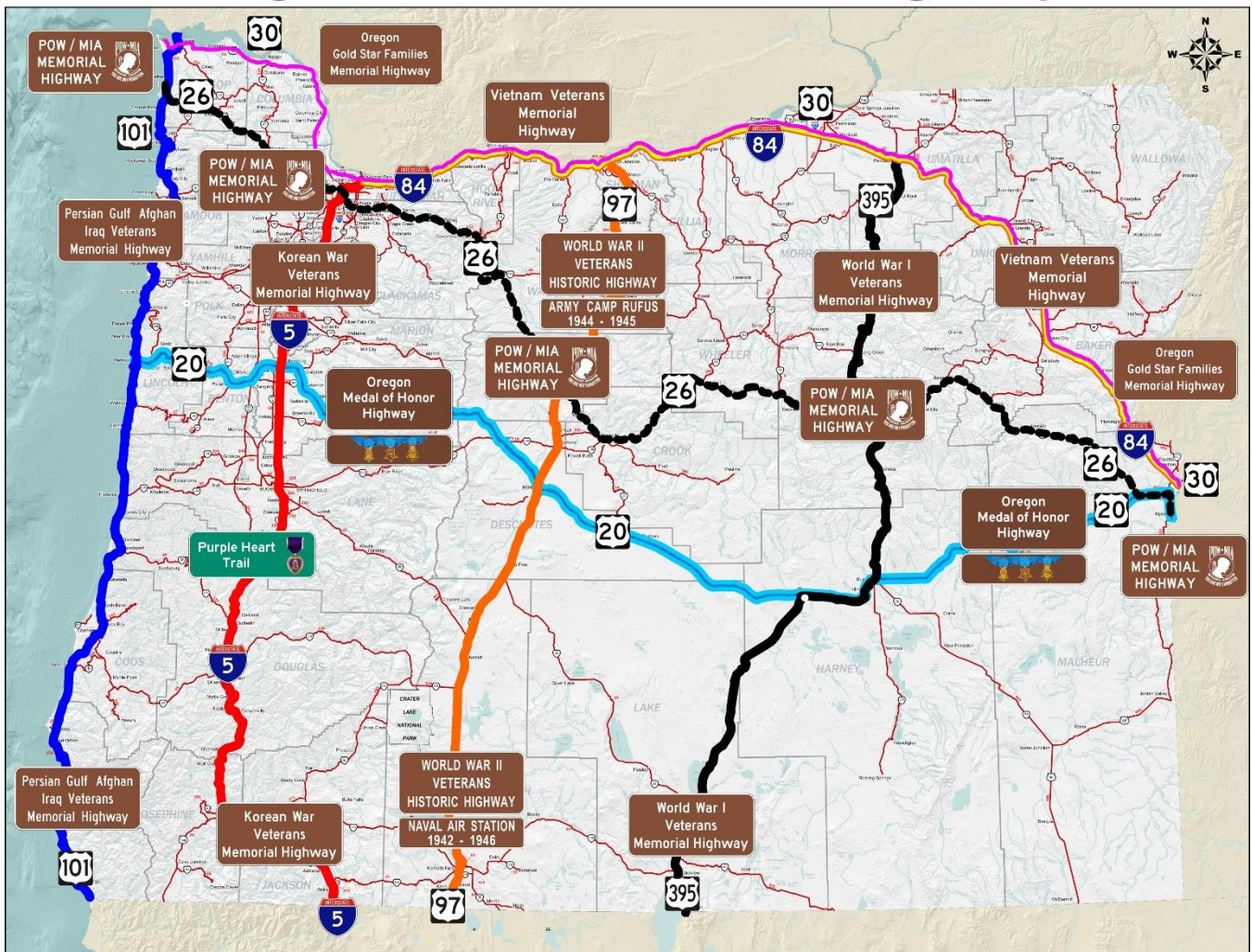
Project Manager, Oregon Veterans Highways, Medal of Honor Highway Across America, National Medal of Honor Highway

LTC US Army Retired, Master Army Aviator

Member: American Legion, DAV, MOAA, MOPH, VFW, VVA

2-21-23

Oregon Veterans Memorial Highways



8 BORDER TO BORDER VETERANS HIGHWAYS ACROSS OREGON HONOR 480,000 OREGON WARTIME VETERANS
97 SIGNS INSTALLED 2010 – 2022 TOTAL LENGTH 3,011 MILES



WWI VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 395



WWII VETERANS HISTORIC HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 97, PORTION S.R. 126



OREGON NISEI VETERANS WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL HIGHWAY, S.R. 35



KOREAN WAR HIGHWAY AND PURPLE HEART TRAIL, I-5



VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY, I-84



PERSIAN GULF, AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY, U.S. HWY 101



OREGON MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAY, U.S. HWY 20

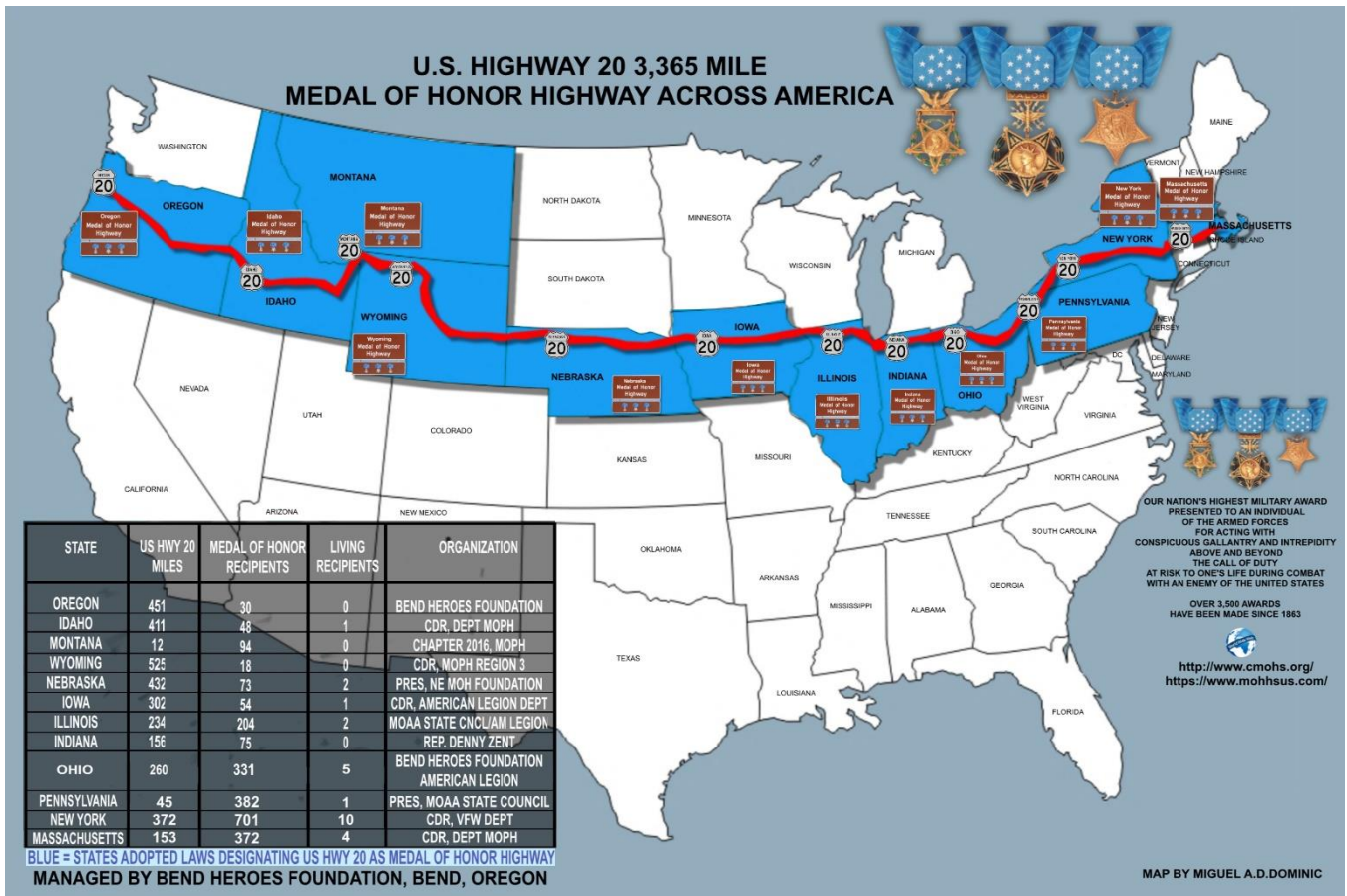


POW/MIA MEMORIAL HIGHWAY, U.S. HWY 26

Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway



PROPOSED 4 FT X 8 FT SIGN ON 477 MILE US HWY 30 ACROSS OREGON



ALL 12 STATES ALONG US HWY 20 HAVE ADOPTED LAWS CREATING STATE MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAYS ACROSS THE COAST TO COAST, 3,365 MILE US 20 HIGHWAY HONORING 62% OF OUR NATION'S 3,515 MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS FROM ALL 50 STATES



TYPICAL OF 86 BLUE STAR MEMORIAL HIGHWAY SIGNS INSTALLED ACROSS OREGON
TYPICALLY, IN REST STOPS