

Good morning, Senator Manning.

April 20, 2023

Re: HB 2146A

I want you to know how important this Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway is to me.

I am the president of the West Linn Garden Club. The Blue Star marker program was started more than 70 years ago, WL GC over 100 years ago. I am proud to say the WLGC has long supported this program; we financed the marker at the I-205 overlook at Willamette Falls and one of our members is the Oregon State Federated Garden Clubs Blue Star Marker chair. As we embraced the Blue Star Markers, so we embrace the Gold Star Highway. Not only have we contributed to a marker, I challenged other clubs to match our contribution.

No amount of metal highway signs bring back the beloved of the families we honor. But we do honor even though we cannot feel the pain of that loss. America needs to remember that our freedom is not free. America needs to remember that there is a cost to war above and beyond tax dollars. These families paid with flesh and blood of their kin. A designated highway seems a pittance by comparison.

These markers are important to me. Just as most in my cohort group, my family lost members to war in WWII. In fact, they remain listed as Missing in Action. My father-in-law was a tail gunner in Italy; most of his unit never returned. My father was in Korea for 3 years; he never talked about it. My husband spent 2 tours of duty in Vietnam, several months of which were behind enemy lines; his mother said he really never came home. I could go on about his nightmares and his demons that are now mine as well. I could go on but I will just say.....

...These designations are important to me.

And I believe these markers are what America needs to remember.

With regards,

Diane Awalt, President
West Linn Garden Club