

Bend Heroes Foundation
1900 NE 3rd St., Ste 106 #205
Bend, OR 97702

February 6, 2024

Re: HCR 202

Thank you Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Lewis and distinguished committee members for this opportunity to testify to the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government and Veterans today on HCR 202

I am Dick Tobiason, Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation. The Foundation is located in Bend, Oregon and designated by the IRS as a non-profit 501c3 entity. For the record, my full name is Allan Richard Tobiason.

I thank fellow Army veteran Vice Chair Rick Lewis for initiating HCR 202.

If approved, HCR 202 would honor your faithful servant for 20 years of honoring veterans with highways named for them by wars and other designations largely unknown to the public – POW/, MIA, Purple Heart, Medal of Honor, and Gold Star Families and other projects.

HCR 202 includes 8 of the 9 veterans highways across Oregon. The 9th is the Purple Heart Trail on I-5.

Five of the 9 highways are firsts in our nation. Idaho, Utah, and Washington have extended some of Oregon's veterans highways through their states: Vietnam, WWII, and POW/MIA.

I was one of three individuals who requested the Legislature to designate the 41 mile State Route 35 as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway.

By filling in the gap between the California and Washington Purple Heart Trails with the Oregon Purple Heart Trail on I-5, we created the first Purple Heart Trail across our nation in any direction.

The Central Oregon Veterans Village project is included in HCR 202. It was initiated by my son Erik Tobiason, President, Bend Heroes Foundation. The Legislature and Governor Brown passed a measure that shortened the time to start construction.

And Erik and I initiated the Honor Flight of Eastern and Portland Oregon hubs honoring over 550 WWII Heroes with free 4 day trips to our nation's capital visiting their National WWII Memorial and other war memorials and the Capitol.

Two minor corrections:

Line 15, page 1: 1985 should be 2003.

Line 1, page 2: insert "families of" after honoring.

When we dedicate the 477 mile Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway across Oregon on US Hwy 30 this year, the 9th and last border to border highway across Oregon, Bend Heroes Foundation, the Legislature, 4 Governors, veterans groups, and many other patriots will have dedicated 103 highway signs on 3,450 miles of highways within Oregon. On average, travelers will view a sign every 70 miles. That closely approximates the 106 Medal of Honor signs dedicated across the 12 state, coast to coast, 3,365 mile Medal of Honor Highway on US Hwy 20. See attached maps.

Just a quick report on the status of National Medal of Honor Highway: Collectively, The 12 state Medal of Honor Highways honor about 60% of all 3,517 Medal of Honor recipients from all 50 states. A national Medal of Honor Highway on US Hwy 20 would honor all 3,517 and all future recipients from all 50 states of our nation's highest award for Valor during combat with enemies of our nation. To that end and at my request, Senator Ron Wyden introduced S.1478 last May. Under his leadership, S.1478 passed the U.S. Senate unanimously on December 19, 2023 by unanimous consent. We have asked the House of Representatives to also pass S.1478 expeditiously so President Biden can sign it into law on March 25, National Medal of Honor Day. It all started in Oregon 7 years ago with HB 2100.

I am deeply indebted to the late Robert D. "Bob" Maxwell, WWII Medal of Honor and fellow Purple Heart recipient for inspiring me and helping testify on the WWII and Medal of Honor Highways. At my request, the U.S. Congress and President Trump renamed the Bend VA Clinic as the Robert D. Maxwell Department of Veterans Affairs Clinic. Bob lived long enough to see the Oregon and Idaho Medal of Honor Highways dedicated. I kept my promise to Bob to get all 12 states along US Hwy 20 to designate their state Medal of Honor Highways.

Oregon was home to 29 Medal of Honor recipients who earned our nation's highest award for valor during combat from the Civil War to Vietnam. Bob Maxwell was the last surviving recipient from Oregon. On his 95th birthday we dedicated the Oregon Medal of Honor Exhibit at Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum. The Exhibit included displays of photos of each recipient, their Medal of Honor citation, 2 interactive kiosks, a world map showing locations of their acts of valor, and history of the Medal of Honor. Bob Maxwell was my Vice Chair of the Committee designing and fabricating the exhibit.

At my request, the Legislature designated 12 cities across Oregon as Medal of Honor City/Community. I dedicated displays in each city: the Oregon Law and photos and citations of each recipient.

This year I will be completing dedication of the longest highways across Oregon and our nation – Gold Star Families and National Medal of Honor thus wrapping up 15 years of non-stop effort according to my wife and sons.

I have submitted fact sheets on the 9 Oregon Veterans highways and National Medal of Honor Highway to the Committee's files. Note the maps.

Based on our experience with the National Medal of Honor Highway, I have urged other groups to complete the east-west Gold Star Families, Purple Heart, and Pearl Harbor highways across our nation. I also requested the National leadership of the Vietnam Veterans of America to initiate the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway on I-80.

Observations made during this process:

*There are no highways across our nation honoring WWI, WWII, and Korean War Veterans.

- *There was a short lived “Victory Highway” across the USA honoring WWI Veterans,
- *The only enduring coast to coast highway honoring war veterans is the Civil War’s Grand Army of the Republic Highway on US Hwy 6, US Hwy 395, and SR 14. It was dedicated 71 years ago.
- *The U.S. Congress dedicated coast to coast highways honoring Presidents Lincoln and Eisenhower.

Vice Chair Lewis will be pleased that we will dedicate a Fallen Hero Memorial Highway sign honoring the late Norvin D. Brockett, a Korean War returned MIA on the POW/MIA Highway on June 14 – Flag Day and the Army’s 249th birthday all made possible by HB 2144 advocated by Vice Chair Lewis.

Not only am I grateful to the Legislature and Governors, I am also most appreciative of ODOT’s outstanding support from Marie Kennedy, State Sign Engineer, the ODOT Sign Shop, and the many ODOT sign crews across Oregon. We raised about \$180,000 to pay ODOT to fabricate and install 93 signs on 8 highways with \$25,000 more to raise for 10 signs on the Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway.

Based in part on the 9 veterans highways, I will be inducted into the Oregon Military Hall of Fame on April 28. This committee and its predecessors and Senate counterparts made that happen!

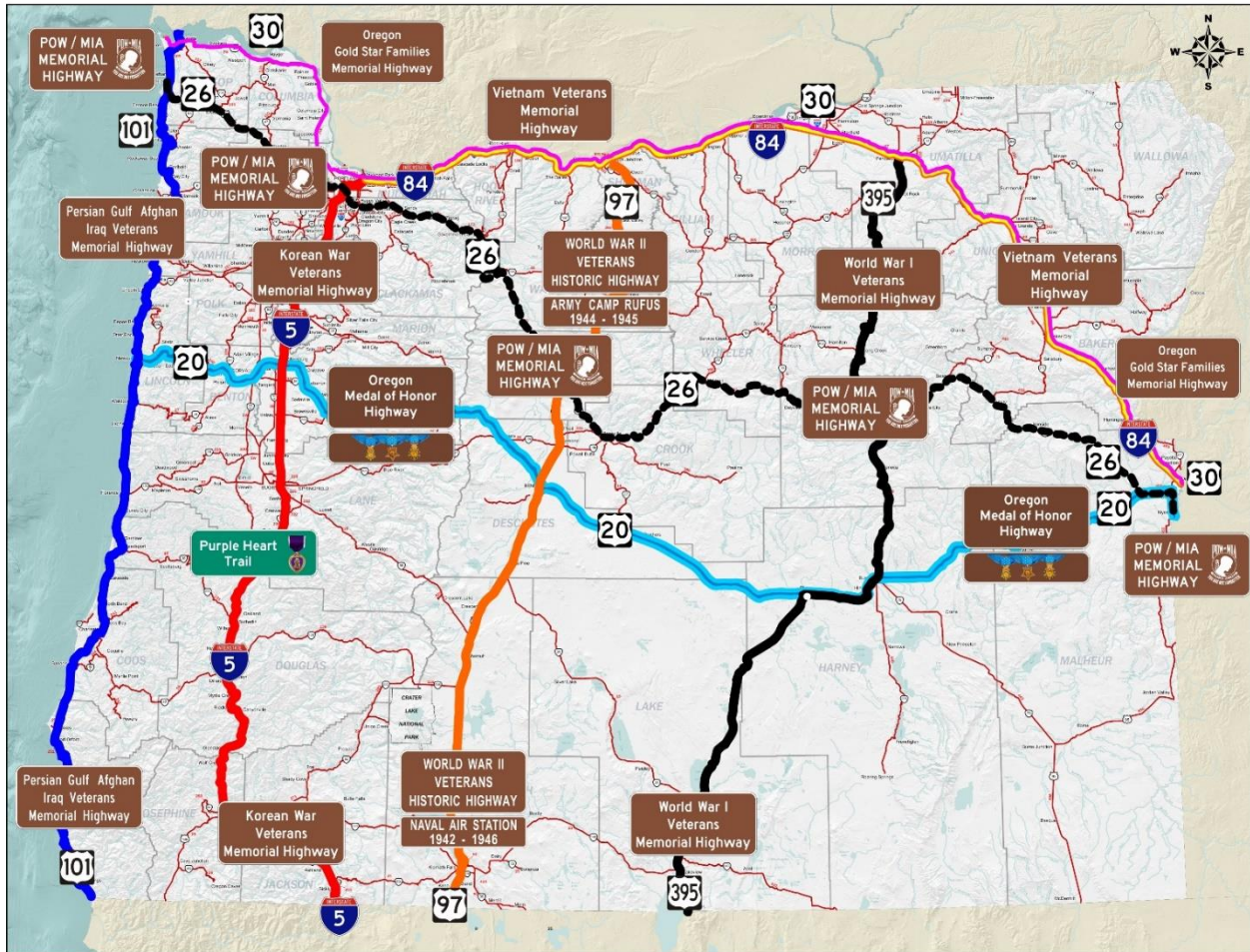
I sincerely appreciate your trust in me and respectfully request this Committee to vote Aye on HCR 202 with a Do Pass recommendation. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I would be pleased to respond to any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

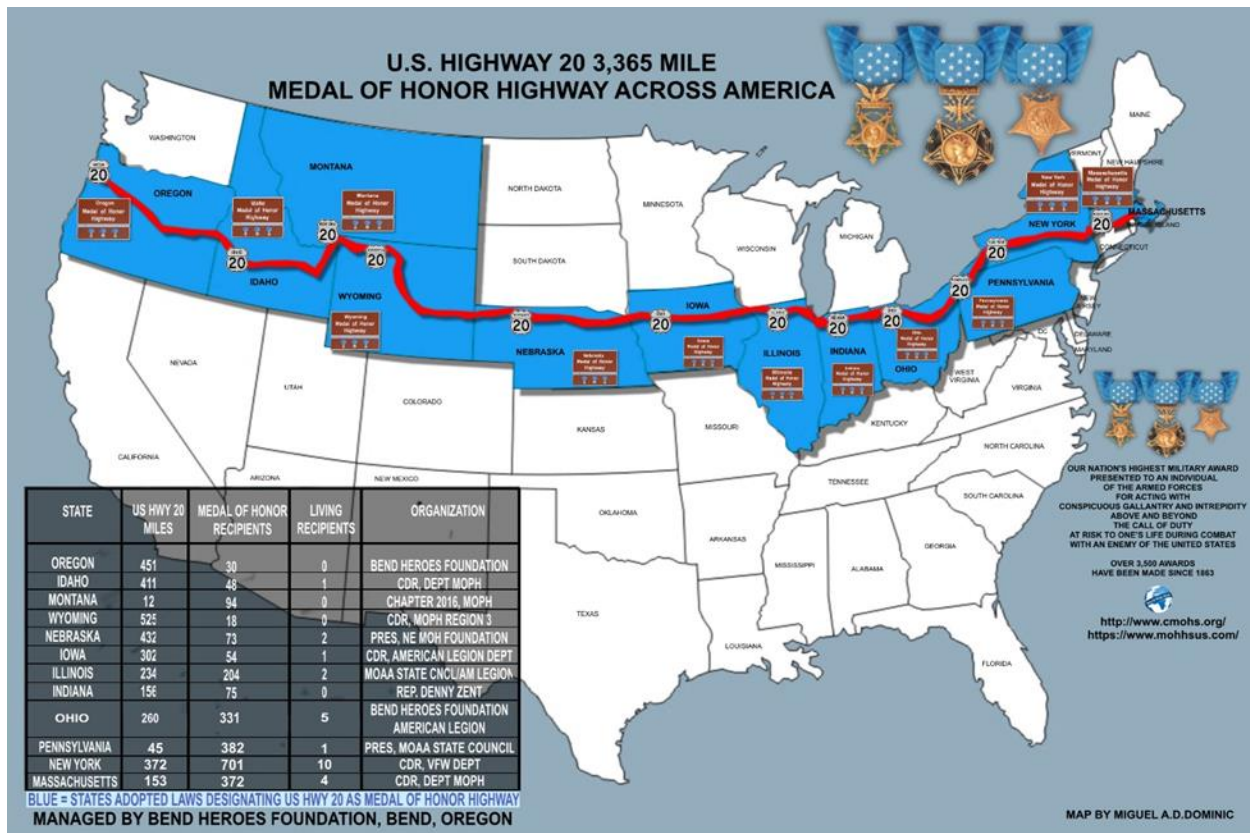
Dick Tobiason, Chairman

2-5-24 1400

Oregon Veterans Memorial Highways



9 BORDER TO BORDER VETERANS HIGHWAYS ACROSS OREGON HONOR 480,000 OREGON WARTIME VETERANS AND 6,000 GOLD STAR FAMILIES
 93 SIGNS INSTALLED 2010 – 2018 TOTAL LENGTH 3,447 MILES



3,365 MILE MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAY ACROSS AMERICA ON US HWY 20 BETWEEN PACIFIC AND ATLANTIC OCEANS