

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

February 18, 2024

Re: HCR 202

Thank you Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp and distinguished committee members for this opportunity to testify to the Senate Committee on Rules today in support of 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.

If approved, HCR 202 would honor your faithful servant for 20 years of honoring Oregon's nearly one – half million war veterans with highways named for them by wars and other designations largely unknown to the public – POW/MIA, Purple Heart, Medal of Honor, Nisei veterans, and Gold Star Families and other projects such as Honor Flight, Wreaths Across America, Bend Parade of Flags, Bend Heroes Memorial, Oregon Medal of Honor Exhibit, Oregon Medal of Honor Cities, Robert D. Maxwell VA Clinic, Blue Star/Gold Star By-Way Memorials, to name a few of the more than 35 completed projects.

Senator Knopp has sponsored measures for every veterans highway since he was elected to the Legislature. I have testified to Senator Manning's veterans committee many times. I am deeply grateful for Senator Knopp's and Senator Manning's outstanding trust and support!

Five of the 9 veterans 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.

The veterans highways not only honor veterans and families, they also help educate the traveling public.

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. It was a great honor and privilege working with Dr. Linda Tamura, Eric Ballinger and their outstanding team dedicating that highway intimately connected with Nisei veterans and their families.

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 107 highway signs on 3,490 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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 by unanimous consent on December 19, 2023. 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. 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. 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.

This year in my last year as an octogenarian I will be completing dedication of the longest highways across Oregon and our nation – Gold Star Families Memorial 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 attached 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.

Not only am I grateful to the Legislature and Governors, I am also most appreciative of ODOT's outstanding support from State Sign Engineer Marie Kennedy, the ODOT Sign Shop, and the many ODOT sign installation crews across Oregon. We raised about \$180,000 to pay ODOT to fabricate and install 97 signs on 9 highways with \$25,000 more to raise for 10 signs on the Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway on US Hwy 30.

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!

Three revisions to HCR 202:

Line 30, page 1: add after legislation – in 2015 designating the Purple Heart Trail,

Line 15, page 1: 1985 should be 2003.

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

I sincerely appreciate your trust in me and respectfully request this Committee to vote Aye on HCR 202 with the -1 Amendment with a Do Pass recommendation. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.

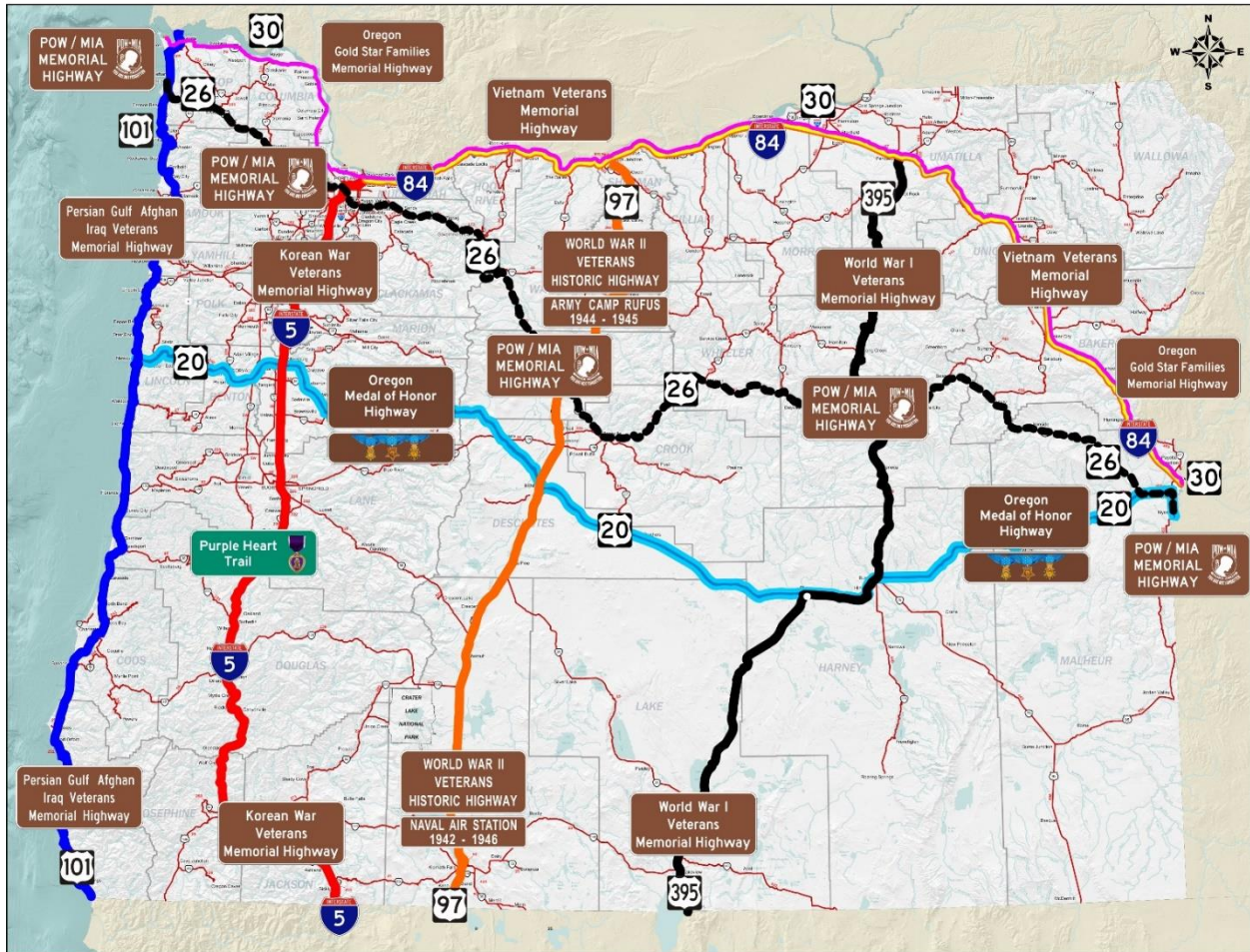
I would be pleased to respond to any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

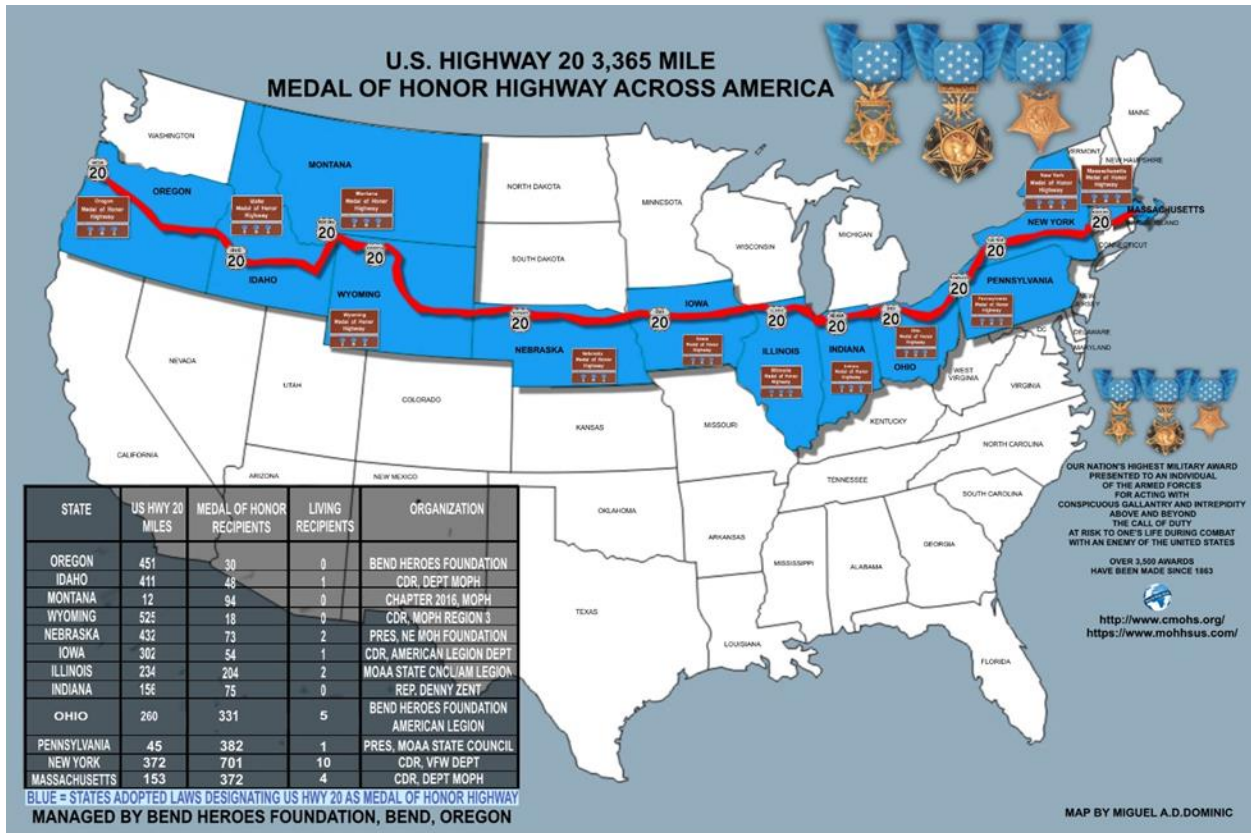
Dick Tobiason, Chairman

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# 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