

Bend Heroes Foundation  
1900 NE 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Ste 106, #205  
Bend, OR 97701

January 26, 2021

Dear Chair Evans.

Ref: HB 2700 Roadside markers for POWs and MIAs

HB 2700 relates solely to members of the Armed Forces. HB 2700 should be revised to also include Oregon's civilians who were working under US Navy contract building Navy facilities in the Pacific and who became POW and MIA during WWII. The Navy's civilian construction contractors operated under the name "Contractors Pacific Naval Air Bases (CPNAB)". The CPNAB workers were belatedly given VA benefits in 1981.

Of the 1145 civilian construction workers employed at Wake Island when the Japanese attacked and eventually captured Wake beginning on Dec. 8, 1941, 133 were Oregonians. Thirty three (33) Oregonians died while defending Wake or subsequently as POW slave laborers at Wake Island and at several Japanese POW Camps elsewhere. One Oregonian still remains MIA. Sixteen civilian POWs were laid to rest in DVA's National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) in Honolulu. Sixty more were laid to rest in Oregon.

I have requested the names of the 33 civilian POWs be added to the Oregon WWII Memorial on the Capitol grounds.

Each year the US Navy conducts a memorial service at Soto Dam in Sasebo, Japan honoring the 53 civilian POWs taken at Wake Island and who died as slave laborers building the dam during WWII. Twelve of the 53 were Oregonians.

The remains of 10 civilian Wake Island POWs were returned to Oregon for burial in 6 Oregon cities. With a revision to HB 2700, those 10 would be eligible for roadside markers.

DPAA does not list Oregon's WWII Wake Island POWs and MIAs although DPAA has listed names of recovered and returned civilian MIAs from the Cold War and Vietnam War.

DPAA has recently recovered and identified the remains of an Oregonian who became MIA during the Korean War. The remains are being stored in Hawaii due to COVID-19 with burial at Arlington National Cemetery planned for some time this year. It is not clear if the remains will be returned to Oregon or sent directly to ANC. HB 2700 should also be revised to include remains returned to family or next of kin as well as "returned to Oregon".

Respectfully submitted,

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