

Bend Heroes Foundation
1900 NE 3rd St, Ste 106, #205
Bend, OR 07701

March 16, 2021

Senator James Manning Jr.
Chair, Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness
900 Court Street NE, Room 453, Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 790 Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway Across Oregon on US Hwy 30

Dear Senator Manning and Committee members.

My name is Dick Tobiason. I serve as Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation located at the above address. I am a retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel and Master Army Aviator having served during 2 combat tours in Vietnam. I am a member of the American Legion, Band of Brothers, Military Officers Association of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Oregon Veterans Motorcycle Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Vietnam Veterans of America.

It is an honor and privilege to testify to you today in support of SB 790. I also thank Senator Tim Knopp for sponsoring SB 790 and for championing past legislation honoring Oregon's veterans with wartime highways.

If adopted into law, US Hwy 30 would honor Oregon's veterans who have served and will serve during peacetime between past and future wars and veterans who might serve in any future wars.

Since 2008, the non-profit Bend Heroes Foundation has initiated legislation for 8 veterans highways across Oregon honoring nearly one-half million Oregonians who served in the Armed Forces of the United States during 5 major wars over the last 104 years: WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam and Persian Gulf/Afghanistan/Iraq.

Nearly 6,000 veterans died, about 15,000 were wounded, over 920 became Prisoners of War (POW) and 999 Oregonians still remain Missing in Action (MIA) from those wars. Thirty veterans connected with Oregon received the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest military award for valor during combat from the Civil War to Vietnam.

The highways are:

World War I Veterans Memorial Highway on US Hwy 395
WORLD WAR II VETERANS HISTORIC HIGHWAY on US Hwy 97, portion of SR 126*
Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway on Interstate 5
Vietnam War Veterans Memorial Highway on Interstate 84
Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq Veterans Memorial Highway on US Hwy 101*
Purple Heart Trail on Interstate 5**
Oregon Medal of Honor Highway on US Hwy 20*
POW/MIA Memorial Highway on US Hwy 26*

*First in the USA ** Connects Purple Heart Trails in California and Washington creating the first continuous Purple Heart Trail across the USA and between Canada and Mexico.

Attached is a map of the highways and photos of veterans at highway signs. Note that the Purple Heart and Medal of Honor medals and POW/MIA logo are displayed on signs. The highways range in length from 292 – 471 miles. The combined length of the highways totals almost 3,000 miles or the distance across our great nation.

Over 90 highway signs have been installed by Oregon Department of Transportation and others on the 8 border to border highways at a cost of about \$110,000 funded by Bend Heroes Foundation and its many generous partners.

During the current legislative session, Bend Heroes Foundation requested the Legislature to designate the 477 mile US Highway 30 across Oregon as the “**Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway**” honoring past, current and future veterans not now honored by the 8 “war” veterans highways: those who served and will serve during peacetime and future wars. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Oregon’s peacetime veterans constitute nearly 25% of the 303,700 veterans living in Oregon (as of 2020). I estimate 110,000 Oregonians served during peacetime between the 5 wars. That means almost 600,000 Oregonians have served during peacetime and wartime. Since WWI began 104 years ago, our nation has been at war for 40 years and at peace for 64 years – all the more reason to honor peacetime veterans.

US Highway 30 is the last and longest border to border highway in Oregon not now designated as a veterans’ highway. It is the 3rd longest highway in our nation. We requested the legislation require display of the seals of the military services and National Guard recognizing the military services must formally approve such as the seals are trademarked. Department of Defense policy: “**Bridge and Highway Signage Dedications** *Generally, the use of Military Service marks is permitted. However, prior written approval must be obtained from the appropriate Military Service Trademark Licensing Program Office*”.

As in the past, Bend Heroes Foundation will raise the necessary funds to pay Oregon Department of Transportation to fabricate and install up to 10 signs on US Hwy 30. All existing highway names assigned to US Hwy 30 will be preserved.

It has been a high privilege to lead this 9 veterans’ highways legacy project over the last 12 years.

I thank the Committee for providing this opportunity to testify in support of SB 790 and respectfully request this Committee to vote in favor of SB 790 with a “Do Pass” recommendation. I also thank your counterparts who served on previous SCVEP Committees.

I will try to respond to any questions.

Respectfully,



Chairman

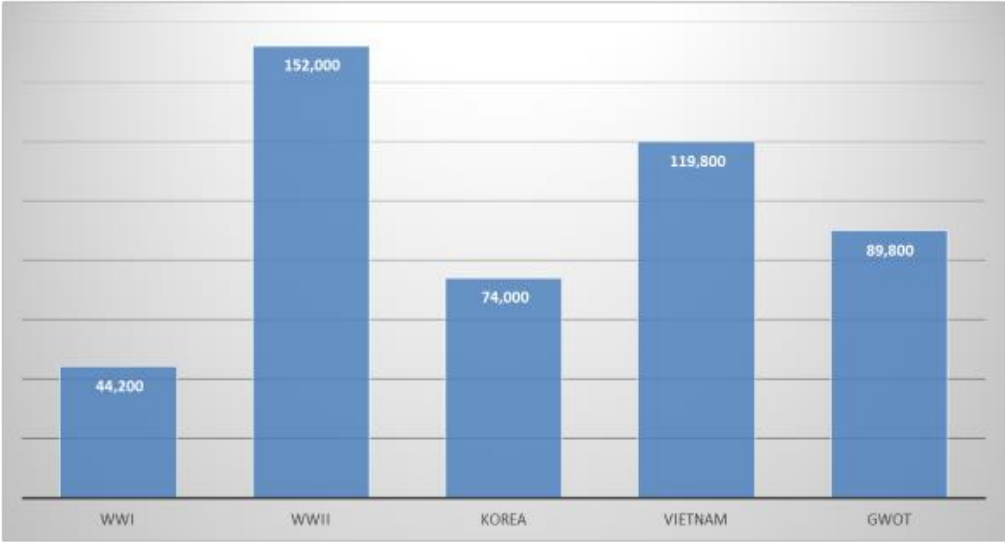
dtobiason@bendcable.com 541 390 9932 <https://www.facebook.com/bendheroes/>

cc: Sen. Knopp, Rep. Zika, BHF

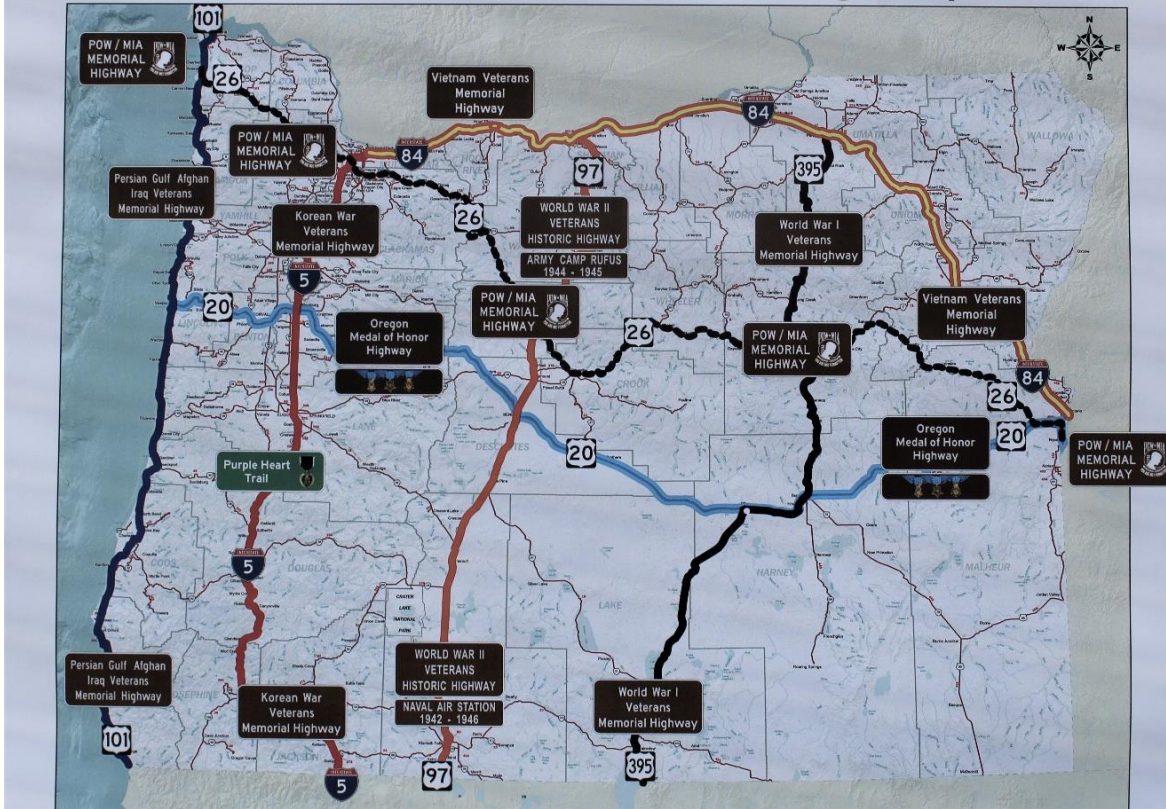
OREGON VETERANS WAR CASUALTIES

WAR	SERVED	DIED	ESTIMATED WOUNDED	TOTAL CASUALTIES	HIGHWAY
WWI	44,166	1,066	1,800	2,866	US 395
WWII	152,000	3,772	9,900	13,672	US 97/SR126
KOREA	74,000	269	672	941	I-5
VIETNAM	119,784	803	2,000	2,803	I-84
GWOT*	89,812	112	679	790	US 101
TOTAL	479,762	6,022	15,051	21,072	

Oregon's 480,000 Veterans Served During 5 Major Wars



Oregon Veterans Memorial Highways



8 BORDER TO BORDER HIGHWAYS ACROSS OREGON

93 SIGNS on 2,969 MILES of HIGHWAY

5 HIGHWAYS ARE FIRSTS IN USA



WORLD WAR I VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY US HWY 395



WORLD WAR II VETERANS HISTORIC HIGHWAY US HWY 97 & SR 126



KOREAN WAR VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY
&
PURPLE HEART TRAIL on I-5



VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY on I-84

(EXTENDED THROUGH ID & UT: 770 MILES)

LONGEST CONTINUOUS MULTI-STATE VIETNAM HIGHWAY IN USA



PERSIAN GULF, AFGHANISTAN, and IRAQ VETERANS
MEMORIAL HIGHWAY on US HWY 101

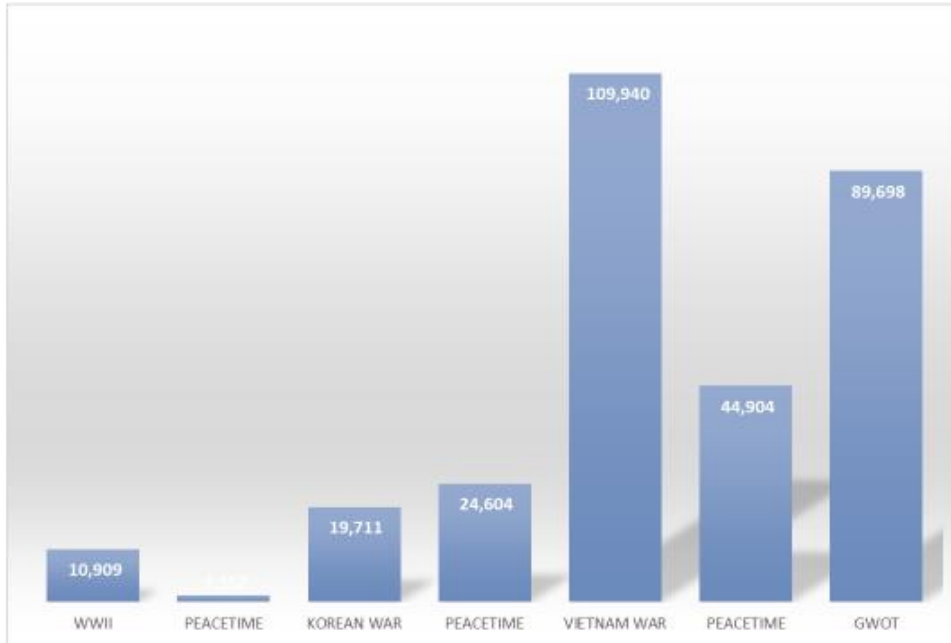


OREGON MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAY on US HWY 20
(BEING EXTENDED ACROSS USA THROUGH 11 STATES)



POW/MIA MEMORIAL HIGHWAY on US HWY 26
(BEING EXTENDED THROUGH ID)

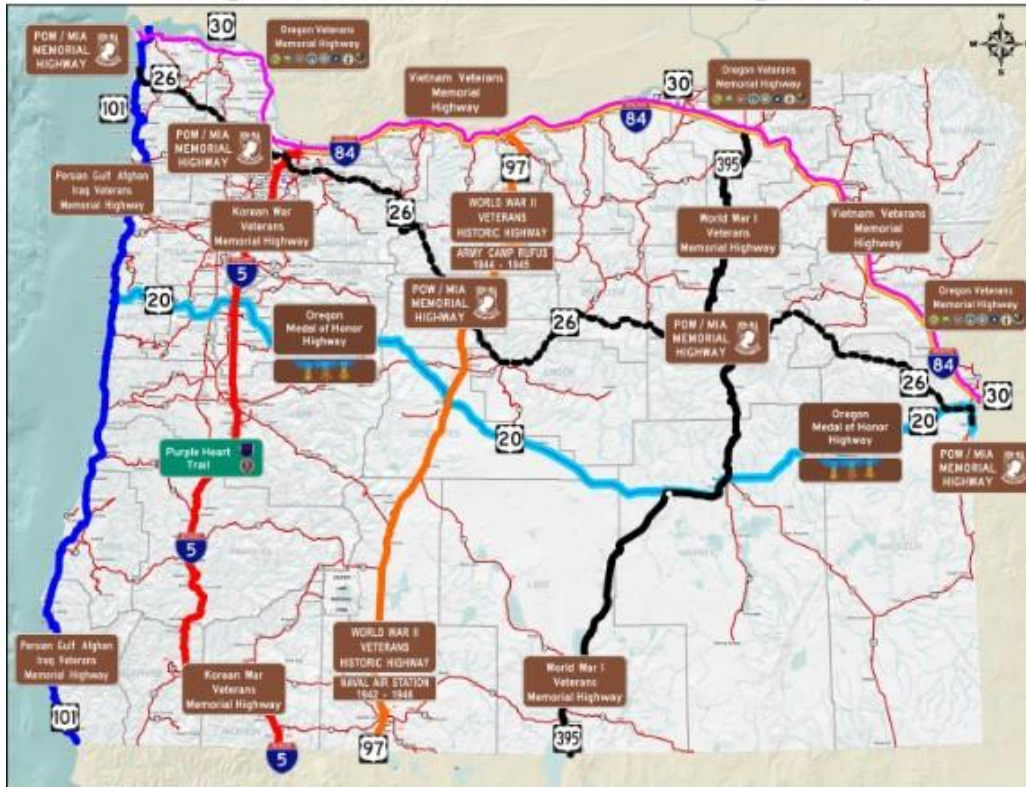
Oregon's Living Wartime & Peacetime Veterans
232,801 War + 70,888 Peace = 303,689 Total
(VA Data 2020)



PEACETIME VETERANS ALMOST 25% OF ALL LIVING VETERANS

Map of US Hwy 30: Astoria - Ontario

Oregon Veterans Memorial Highways



Concept: Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway
Sign (4 ft. x 8 ft.)

