

Bend Heroes Foundation
1900 NE 3rd St, Ste 106, #205
Bend, OR 97701

April 21, 2021

Representative Paul Evans
Chair, House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management
900 Court Street NE, Room H-471, Salem, OR 97301

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

Dear Representative Evans and Committee members.

My name is Dick Tobiason. I am the 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, Bend Band of Brothers, Military Officers Association of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Oregon Veterans Motorcycle Association/High Desert Eagles Chapter, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Vietnam Veterans of America.

It is an honor and privilege to testify to you today in support of SB 790A. I also thank Senator Tim Knopp for sponsoring SB 790A at my request and for championing past legislation honoring Oregon's veterans with "wartime" highways. The Oregon Senate voted 28 "Ayes" and 2 "Excused" in support of SB 790A on May 1, 2021.

If adopted into law, the **Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway** across Oregon on the 477 mile 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. Those are "wartime" highways

Nearly 6,000 veterans died, about 15,000 were wounded, over 920 became Prisoners of War (POW) and 999 Oregonians are still 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 8 Veterans highways are:

World War I Veterans Memorial Highway on US Hwy 395
World War II Veterans Historic Highway on US Hwy 97 and 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 within Oregon 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 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 any future wars.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Oregon’s 70,888 peacetime veterans constitute nearly 25% of the 303,689 veterans living in Oregon (as of 2020). I estimate 110,000 Oregonians served during peacetime between the 5 wars.

US Highway 30 is the last and longest border to border highway in Oregon not now designated as a veterans’ highway. US Hwy 30 partly overlaps the WWI Veterans Memorial Highway on US Hwy 395 and Vietnam War Veterans Memorial Highway on I-84. It also intersects the other 6 veterans’ highways on US Hwy 101, I-5, US Hwy 97, US Hwy 26, and US Hwy 20. Thus all peacetime veterans are connected with the 8 war highways. Any future Medal of Honor and Purple Heart recipients and POWS and MIAs would be honored with those 3 existing highways across Oregon – all are firsts in the USA.

US Hwy 30 is the 3rd longest highway in our nation stretching from Astoria, OR to Atlantic City, NJ. through 11 states with Oregon’s segment the longest. Perhaps other states will follow Oregon’s lead just as 7 states have already done with Medal of Honor and POW/MIA Memorial Highways.

We requested the legislation require display of the military services and National Guard seals on all signs recognizing the military services must formally approve such as the seals are trademarked. The 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". Attached is our concept of the **Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway** sign.

Altogether, the 9 border to border veterans highways honor almost 600,000 Oregon wartime (480,000) and peacetime (110,000) veterans. Over the last 104 years since WWI began, our nation has been at war for 40 years and at peace for 64 years – all the more reason to honor peacetime veterans. The total mileage of the 9 highways within Oregon is about 3,400 miles or the driving distance between Blaine, WA and Miami, FL.

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 including individual veterans and first responders honored by "Fallen Heroes Memorial Highways" assigned to US Hwy 30 will be preserved.

It has been a high privilege to initiate and manage the 9 veterans' highways project over the last 12 years. It is the Oregon Legislature's lasting legacy to Oregon's veterans for which we veterans are thankful. I also thank your counterparts who served on HCVEM since 2009.

I thank the Committee for providing this opportunity to testify in support of SB 790A and respectfully request this Committee to vote in favor of SB 790A with a "Do Pass" recommendation.

I will respond to any questions.

Respectfully,



Chairman

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

cc: Sen. Knopp, Rep. Zika, BHF

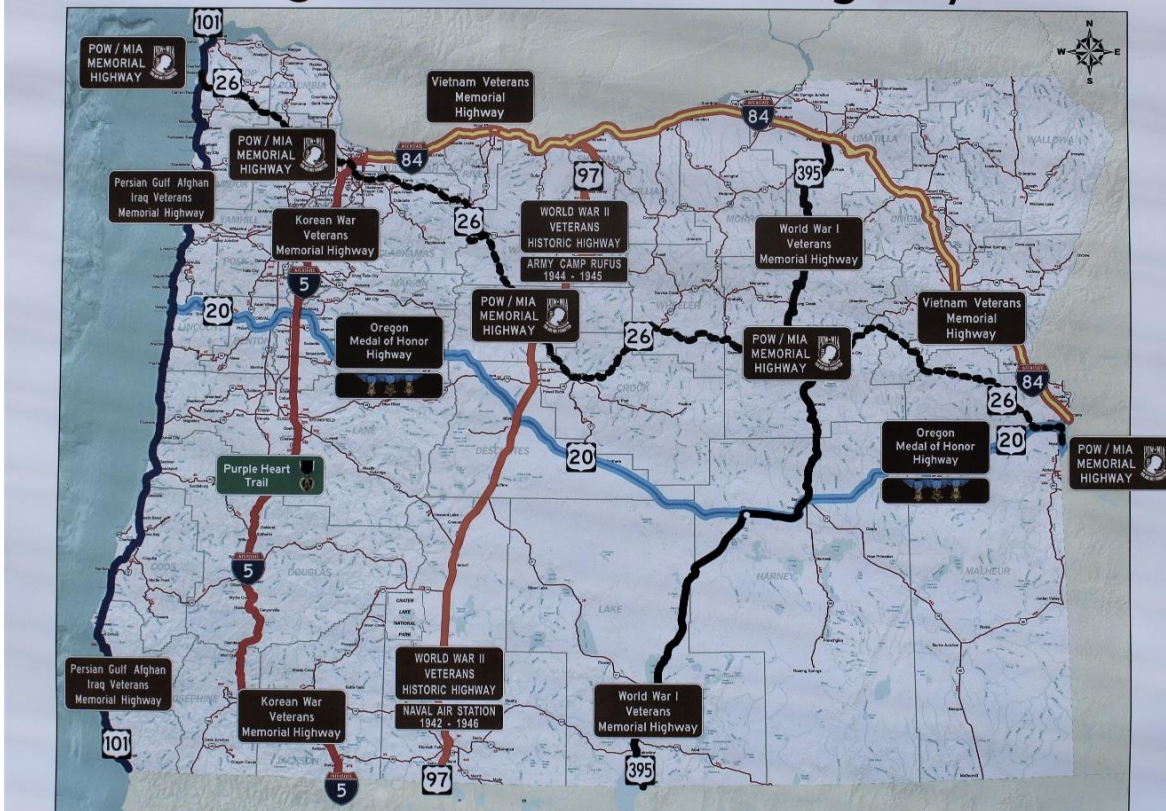
OREGON VETERANS WAR CASUALTIES

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
& PORTION 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

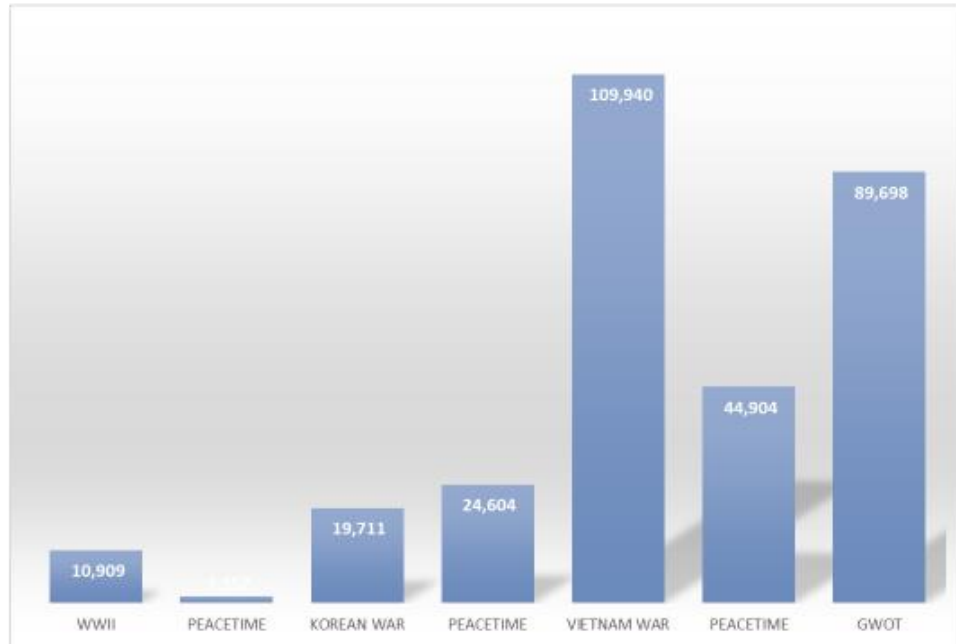


OREGON MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAY on US HWY 20
(BEING EXTENDED ACROSS USA THROUGH 11 STATES)



POW/MIA MEMORIAL HIGHWAY on US HWY 26
(EXTENDED THROUGH ID 2021)

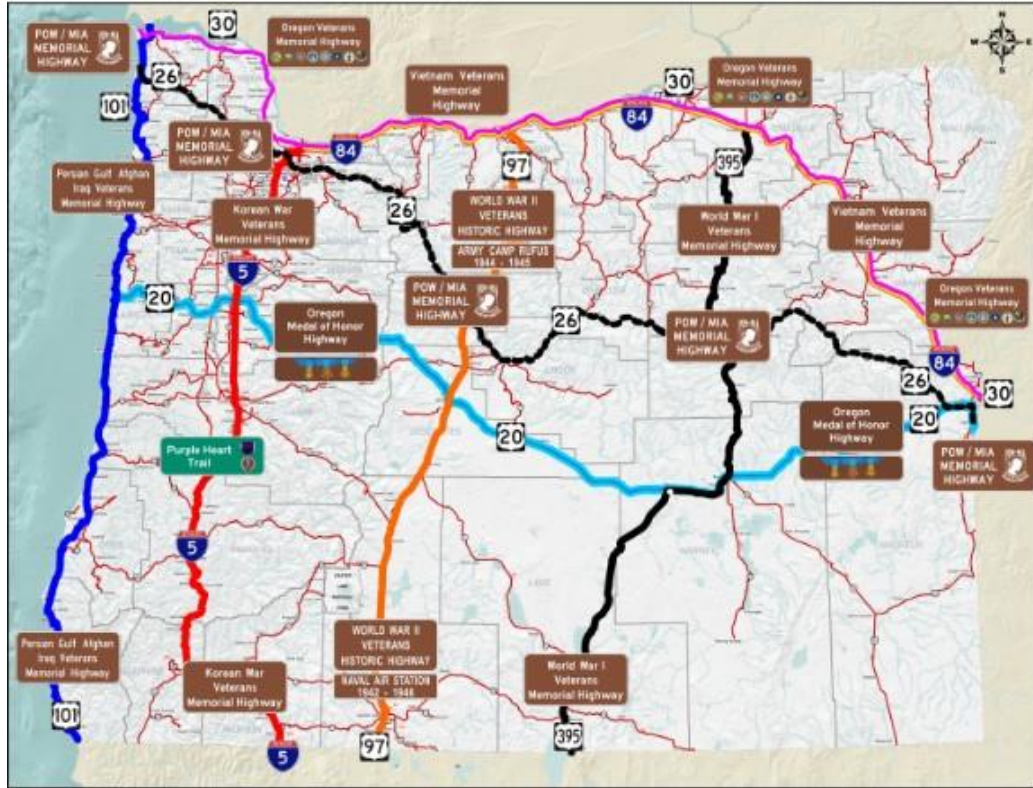
Oregon's Living Wartime & Peacetime Veterans
232,801 War + 70,888 Peace = 303,689 Total
(VA Data 2020)



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.)

