



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Transportation

Director's Office

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DATE: February 11, 2021

TO: Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

FROM: Lindsay Baker, Assistant Director, Government and External Relations
Oregon Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: SB 441 – POW/MIA Roadside Memorial Signs

INTRODUCTION

Senate Bill 441 expands the eligibility for a Fallen Hero roadside memorial sign. The measure states that an individual killed in the line of duty who was formerly designated as either a prisoner of war or unaccounted for by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency be eligible for a roadside memorial sign erected by the Oregon Department of Transportation, without first having a concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislative Assembly.

DISCUSSION

The Oregon Department of Transportation currently manages a roadside memorial sign program, enabling families and communities of fallen heroes to commemorate their sacrifice with roadside sign in their honor. Roadside memorial signs are currently placed for fallen military personnel, law enforcement officers, and firefighters killed in the line of duty after the Oregon Legislature passes a concurrent resolution. SB 441 extends this eligibility to certain fallen military personnel but does not require prior legislative action.

ODOT is honored to administer the roadside memorial sign program and notes SB 441 results in two “tiers” of fallen military personnel: those eligible for a roadside sign without the passage of a concurrent resolution, and those eligible for a roadside sign only after a concurrent resolution is passed. ODOT requests the committee’s consideration of an amendment clarifying that an individual killed in the line of duty who was formerly designated as either a prisoner of war or unaccounted for by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency is eligible for a roadside memorial sign after a concurrent resolution is adopted by the Legislative Assembly.

Following the adoption of a concurrent resolution, ODOT’s current process and management of these roadside memorial signs will remain the same. ODOT will coordinate with families and communities of the fallen heroes to ensure the signs are placed carefully and swiftly after the statutory requirements are met. Placement of roadside memorial signs are informed by family preference, as well as technical design and traffic engineering standards to ensure highway safety and support of ongoing maintenance and operational needs.

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SUMMARY

SB 441 expands ODOT's successful roadside memorial sign program by adding that the families or communities of those individuals classified as a POW/MIA can apply directly to ODOT. ODOT recommends an amendment clarifying that these individuals are eligible for memorial signs after passage of a concurrent resolution by the Legislative Assembly. Based on conversations with the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management and the bill sponsor, who have an identical measure (HB 2700), it is ODOT's understanding that this measure would only apply to a very small number of individuals. This change will not require significant program or administration changes and will therefore have minimal impact on ODOT's budget or programs.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any additional questions.