

## **OREGON HONORS 480,000 WARTIME VETERANS WITH SIGNS ON 8 MAJOR HIGHWAYS ACROSS OREGON**

**WARTIME VETERANS:** During the last 13 years, the non-profit Bend Heroes Foundation was successful in requesting the Oregon legislature and Oregon’s Governors to adopt 5 laws honoring nearly one-half million Oregon veterans who served during 5 major wars: **WWI, WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Wars.**

Almost 6,000 veterans from Oregon made the supreme sacrifice, an estimated 15,000 Oregonians were wounded and over 920 veterans and civilians became Prisoners of War (POWs) during those wars. One thousand (1,000) Oregonians (999 veterans and 1 civilian) still remain Missing in Action (MIA) from WWI to the Vietnam War. Thirty (30) Medal of Honor recipients (Civil War to Vietnam) have close ties with Oregon.

The honors to Oregon’s 479,800 wartime veterans were accomplished by 93 large (4 ft. x 8 ft.) signs installed by Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and others on 8 border-to-border highways totaling almost 3,000 miles in length across Oregon. The first sign was installed in 2010 and the last in 2020. Each highway displays 10 -18 signs with half facing in each direction. The highways range in length from 292 to 471 miles. On average, highway travelers will view a sign every 65 miles.

The 8 Veterans’ highways are:

WWI Veterans Memorial Highway.....	10 signs on U.S. Hwy 395
WWII Veterans Historic Highway.....	18 signs on U.S. Hwy 97/S.R. 126
Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway.....	10 signs on Interstate 5
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway.....	17 signs on Interstate 84
Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans Memorial Highway.....	11 signs on U.S. Hwy 101
Purple Heart Trail.....	5 signs on Interstate 5
Oregon Medal of Honor Highway.....	12 signs on U.S. Hwy 20
POW/MIA Memorial Highway.....	10 signs on U.S. Hwy 26

A map displaying the 8 border to border highways is attached. Five are “firsts in the USA”.

The 292 mile **WWII Veterans Historic Highway** is the first highway to honor WWII veterans as well as inform travelers of nearby WWII training facilities. The **Purple Heart Trail** on Oregon’s 308 mile long I-5 connects with California’s and Washington’s Purple Heart Trails on Interstate 5 thereby creating the first Purple Heart Trail spanning our nation in any direction as well as between Canada and Mexico. Likewise the 338 mile long border-to-border **Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans Memorial Highway** along the beautiful Oregon coast on U.S. Hwy 101 is another first in our nation. And the 451 mile border to border **Oregon Medal of Honor Highway** along U.S. Hwy 20 is our 4th “first in the nation” highway. The 471 mile **POW/MIA Memorial Highway** along U.S. Hwy 26 is the 5<sup>th</sup> “first in the nation” highway. At the

Foundation's request, Idaho has designated its 401 mile U.S. Hwy 26 as POW/MIA Memorial Highway. The Foundation has requested the National League of POW/MIA Families to extend the highway across the USA. The Oregon POW/MIA Memorial and Oregon Medal of Honor Highways intersect all of the war highways.

Crossing the other war highways is the 451 mile **Oregon Medal of Honor Highway** honoring 30 Medal of Honor recipients connected with Oregon who acted with "***conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty at the risk of his life***" during combat with an enemy of the United States thus receiving our nation's highest award for military valor during 8 wars over a 108 year period (Civil War to Vietnam War).

Bend Heroes Foundation is coordinating the designation of 11 more state Medal of Honor Highways across America on U.S. Highway 20, the longest highway in the nation and stretching 3,365 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean between Newport, OR and Boston, MA. Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa, Indiana and Pennsylvania have already adopted the Oregon model. Illinois and Ohio are in the process of designating their Medal of Honor highways. The remaining 2 states (NY, MA) are a work in progress. See attached map.

Oregon's 8 veterans' highway signs were funded by veterans' groups, Boards of County Commissions, civic organizations, several non-profits, businesses and individuals. Bend Heroes Foundation raised over \$110,000 to pay Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and others to fabricate and install 93 honorific signs across Oregon. No state highway funds were used.

Maps and photos of signs on each highway are shown below. Note the display of the **Purple Heart** and **Medal of Honor** Medals and **POW/MIA** logo on highway signs

**PEACETIME VETERANS:** About 110,000 veterans served between the 5 major wars already described. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 303,700 veterans were living in Oregon as of 2020. Almost 25% (70,900) are Peacetime Veterans.

As U.S. Hwy 30 across Oregon between Astoria and the Oregon/Idaho border is the only border to border highway not designated to honor veterans, Bend Heroes Foundation requested the Oregon Legislature to designate it as the **Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway** honoring veterans who have served and will serve during peacetime and any future war veterans. The Foundation drafted SB 790 for that purpose and included a requirement that all signs display seals of the military services and National Guard.

Note that the 477 mile **Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway** will overlay most of the 377 mile Vietnam War Veterans Memorial Highway and a short section of the WWI Veterans Memorial Highway on I-84. The highway also connects with the other "war" highways symbolically connecting wartime and peacetime veterans. Any future recipients of the Purple Heart and Medal of Honor medals and any future POWs and MIAs would be honored by the 3 existing highways.

**The Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway** will be the longest veterans' highway in Oregon. At 3,073 miles in length, U.S. Hwy 30 stretches across our nation through 11 states from Astoria, OR to Atlantic City, NJ and is the 3<sup>rd</sup> longest highway in our nation. Oregon's 477 mile segment is the longest.

The Foundation along with the American Legion Department of Oregon and Oregon Veterans Motorcycle Association testified to the Legislature in support of SB 790 during March - April, 2021. The Senate passed SB 790 on April 1. The House of Representatives will vote on an amendment to omnibus HB 4066 during the 2022 "short" legislative session. Bend Heroes Foundation submitted testimony to the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management at its public hearing on Feb. 1, 2022.

U.S. Hwy 30 is displayed on the attached map. Also attached is a proposed design of the 4 ft. x 8 ft. **Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway** sign. Note the military seals which are trademarked by the military services. SB 790 requires ODOT to gain approval from the military services and other federal agencies to display the seals.

If HB 4066 becomes law, the Foundation will request ODOT to fabricate and install up to 10 signs along U.S. Hwy 30 with adequate separation from the **Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway** signs. As in the case of the 8 wartime veterans highways, the Foundation will raise funds to pay ODOT to fabricate and install the new signs.

**SUMMARY:** All together almost 600,000 wartime (480,000) and peacetime (110,000) veterans will be honored (if SB 790 becomes law in 2022) with over 100 honorific signs on 9 border to border highways across Oregon. Every border to border highway in Oregon will have been designated as veteran's highways. The total length of the 9 veterans highways within Oregon is about 3,410 miles equaling the longest driving distance across our nation - 3,404 driving distance across the USA between Blaine, WA and Miami, FL. On average there will be a sign every 68 miles. The replacement value of the 100+ signs is about \$200,000. No taxpayer funds were used to honor veterans.

Oregon's Legislators, Governors, Department of Transportation and many patriotic donors have made this 13 year project almost a reality.

It has been a high honor and privilege leading this legacy project honoring Oregon's wartime and peacetime veterans and all veterans who travel across Oregon. **They will not be forgotten.**

Dick Tobiason

Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation, a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization located in Bend, Oregon

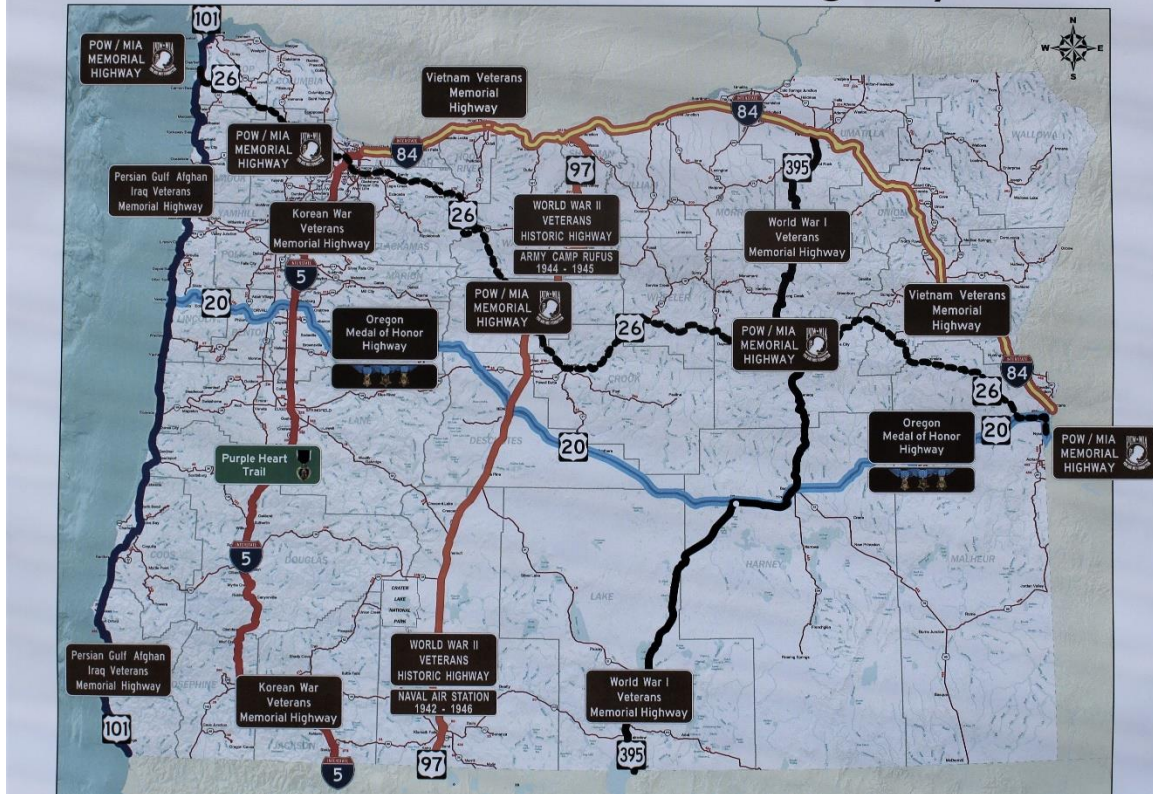
<https://www.facebook.com/bendheroes/>

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2/3/2022 Bend, Oregon

## Oregon Veterans Memorial Highways



8 BORDER TO BORDER VETERANS HIGHWAYS ACROSS OREGON

HONOR 480,000 OREGON WARTIME VETERANS

93 SIGNS INSTALLED 2010-2020

TOTAL LENGTH 2,970 MILES



WWI VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 395



WWII VETERANS HISTORIC HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 97, PORTION S.R. 126





KOREAN WAR HIGHWAY AND PURPLE HEART TRAIL I-5



VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY I-84



PERSIAN GULF, AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 101

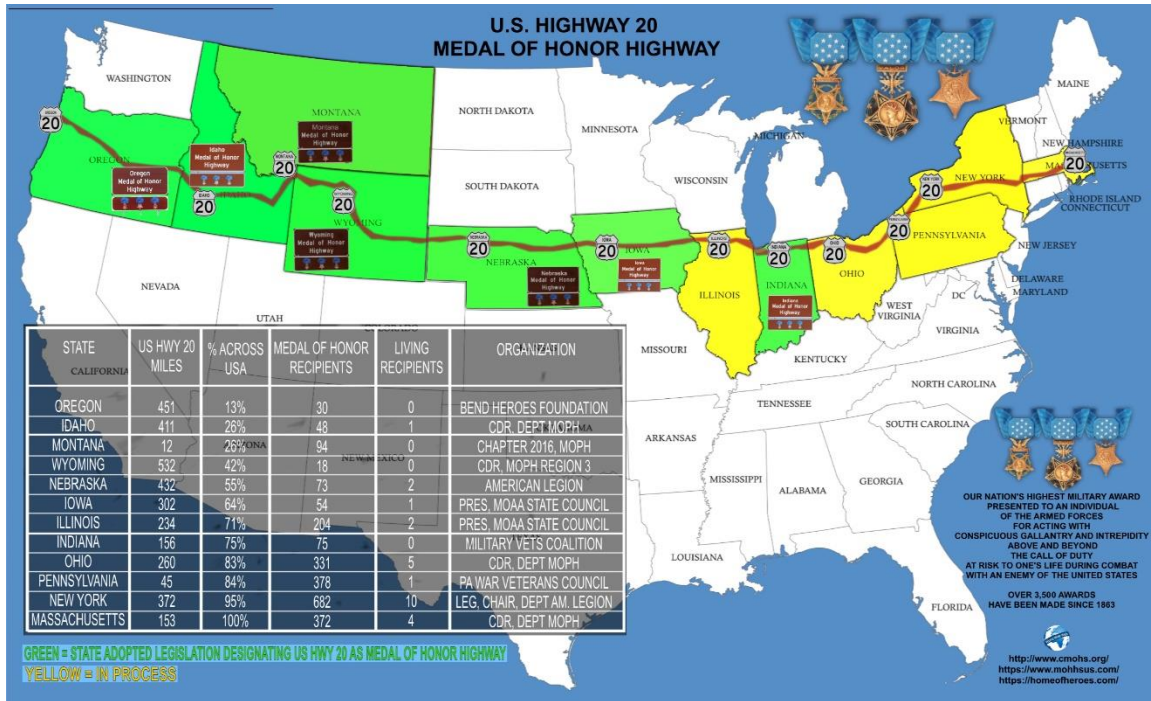


OREGON MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 20



POW/MIA MEMORIAL HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 26

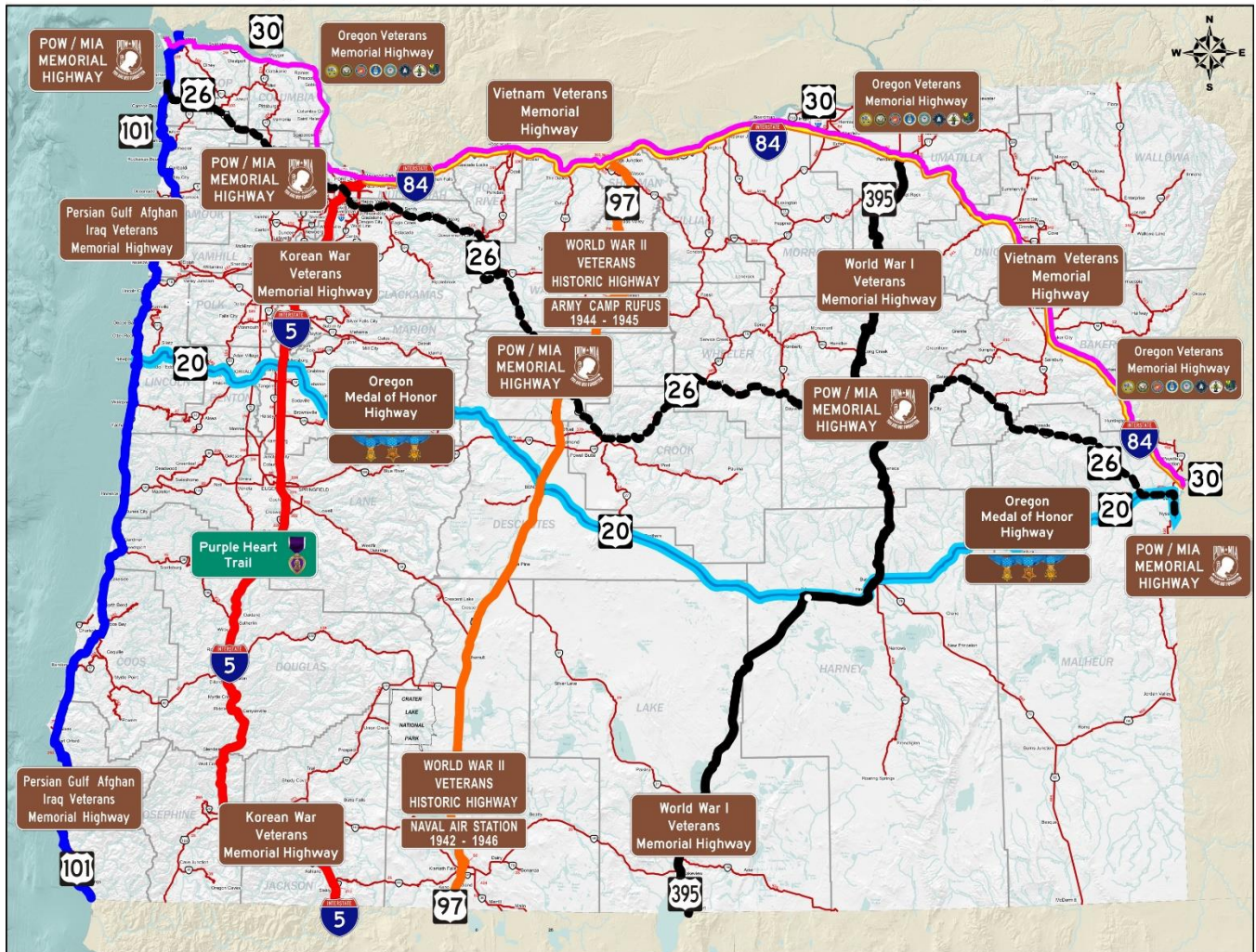




MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAY THROUGH 12 STATES ACROSS AMERICA ON US HIGHWAY 20,  
THE LONGEST HIGHWAY IN AMERICA HONORS 68% OF ALL 3,508 MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS  
FROM ALL 50 STATES

GREEN STATES HAVE ADOPTED LAWS CREATING STATE MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAYS,  
YELLOW STATES ARE IN PROCESS

# Oregon Veterans Memorial Highways



**PROPOSED OREGON VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY ON U.S. HWY 30 (PINK LINE)**

**OREGON SENATE BILL 790**

**WOULD HONOR 110,000 PEACETIME VETERANS AND ANY FUTURE WARTIME VETERANS**

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

