

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

Feb. 24, 2022

Re: HB 4066A Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway US Hwy 30

Chair Manning and distinguished Committee members.

I am Dick Tobiason, Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation and project manager, Oregon Veterans Highways. I am a retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel, Master Army Aviator with 2 combat tours in Vietnam. I am a Purple Heart Recipient.

I am pleased to support the Amendment 2 to HB 4066 that would designate the 477 mile US Highway 30 across Oregon between US Hwy 101 in Astoria and the Oregon/Idaho border as the Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway and which I requested during the last session.

Background: I thank this Committee for supporting the Foundation's requests for legislation over the last 14 years honoring nearly one-half million Oregon wartime veterans with 8 border to border war highways. Five of the 8 highways are first of a kind tributes to veterans in our nation.

The aforementioned 8 veterans highways are "war" highways honoring 480,000 WWI, WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf/Afghanistan/Iraq War veterans, Purple Heart and Medal of Honor recipients and Prisoners of War and Veterans who still remain Missing in Action (MIA). Over the last 13 years, Bend Heroes Foundation raised over \$110,000 to pay ODOT and others to fabricate and install 93 signs along 2,900 miles of 8 border to border highways across Oregon.

During the last session this Committee voted unanimously in support of the Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway located along the 477 mile US Hwy 30 across Oregon – SB 790 sponsored by Sen. Tim Knopp at my request. The Senate also voted unanimous support thanks to this Committee's unanimous vote.

The House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management held a public hearing on SB 790A last session and at which I, The Oregon Department of the American Legion and Oregon Veterans Motorcycle Association (OVMA) testified in support. That Committee did not vote on SB 790A as it wanted ODOT to advise it if that highway duplicated any other veterans' highways. Apparently, it did not as I was told the Committee would entertain legislation during the "short" session. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Rick Lewis as an amendment to omnibus HB 4066. I testified in support of that Amendment on Feb 1.

Bend Heroes Foundation, American Legion Department of Oregon and Oregon Veterans Motorcycle Association support the Amendment to HB 4066:

The Foundation has determined that approximately 110,000 Oregon veterans served between the 5 major wars and are named "Peacetime" veterans by the VA. Further, the 70,000 Peacetime veterans living in Oregon constitute almost 25% of all 300,000 veterans living in Oregon. By definition Peacetime veterans are not honored by the "war" highways and they would be if HB 4066A is enacted into law. Some of the "peacetime" vets also served during war such as myself. Another reason to honor Peacetime veterans is the fact our nation has been at "peace" for 65 cumulative years out of the last 105 years since WWI with 40 cumulative years at war.

The 477 mile Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway across Oregon on US Hwy 30 would also honor all future peacetime and any future wartime veterans. Future wartime veterans who receive the Purple Heart and/or Medal of Honor awards or who become POWs and MIAs will be honored by those existing highways intersecting US Hwy 30.

The Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway on US Hwy 30 would intersect the 5 “war” highways, Purple Heart Trail, Medal of Honor and POW/MIA highways and collectively honor almost 600,000 veterans – 480,000 wartime and 110,000 peacetime veterans. Thanks to this Committee the highway would also intersect the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway on SR 35 at Hood River if the HB 4066 Amendment and SB 1509A are enacted into law this session.

Should this Committee again vote in favor of the 477 mile Oregon Veterans Memorial Highway along US Hwy 30, the total distance covered by Oregon’s 9 border to border veterans’ highways would total about 3.400 miles or the longest driving distance across our nation – Blaine, WA to Miami, FL.

I requested the highway signs display the seals of the military services and National Guard. I displayed a mockup of the sign during last year’s testimony on SB 790A. The HB 4066 Amendment requires ODOT to gain approvals from the military services and other federal agencies to display the seals as was required by SB 790A.

Veterans and other patriots will again pay ODOT to fabricate and install signs along US Hwy 30. We will ask ODOT to locate the signs at appropriate distances from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway signs on I-84 which overlaps US Hwy 30 for much of its length. ODOT has agreed to that. All other highway names given to any segment of US Hwy 30 - such as Fallen Hero Highway will remain unchanged.

In 2017 this Committee supported my request for legislation designating US Hwy 20 across Oregon as the Oregon Medal of Honor Highway. I am pleased to tell you that we have extended that highway almost all the way across America as envisioned in HB 2100.

On behalf of the Oregon Department of the American Legion, Oregon Veterans Motorcycle Association and Bend Heroes Foundation, I respectfully request this Committee to unanimously vote “Aye” and with a “Do Pass” recommendation for HB 4066A.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

signed

Dick Tobiason

Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation

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