

Submitter: Wendall Pelham

On Behalf Of: Oregon Gold Star Families

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Measure: HB3001

Testimony From Gold Star Father for OR HB 3000 & 3001

Good Afternoon "Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Tran, and members of the Committee," I am Wendall Pelham, Son of 34 year retired/deceased US Army Col. Wendall Pelham, Brother of 18 year retired/deceased US Army Ranger Staff Sargent Richard Pelham and Father of 2 ½ year US Army SPC John A. Pelham, KIA on 12 February, 2014 while serving with the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Special Forces Group (A). Thank you for the opportunity to share with you our Love of our Country, the Love of our State and the Love of our Active, Reserve, Guard and retired military service members.

Today, we hope to impress on you the ongoing need to ensure the legacies of our those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for our State and Country. Each of us will talk about Honor, Integrity, Legacy, and Sacrifice. We are and do represent the Gold Star Families in the State of Oregon and throughout the United States of America.

As the son of a career US Army officer, I grew up living all over the world. I have lived a life so filled with amazing experiences, amazing individuals, in amazing town, cities, states and countries, none of these experiences would prepared me for the notification of the Death of my Son John on 12 February, 2014 while serving in the Tagab District of the Kapisa Province of Afghanistan. In 10 day, we will celebrate John's 9 year Angelversary. 9 Years of pain, anguish, grief, and pride. Out of the most devastating news a parent could ever receive, have come some of the most powerful, beautiful, life enhancing experiences one could only imagine. For the last 5 years, I have had the opportunity to serve as a Civilian Advisor to the Chief of Staff of the Army, specifically on how we take care of the deceased families. Co-Found with my Wife Dawn, the "Live Like John Foundation

Our ask today is that you help us make sure their sacrifice for the State of Oregon and the United States of America are never forgotten, that through the Highway Heroes Sign program and the Gold Star vehicle license plates we will always be able to speak their names, when we cannot speak their names, the signs and license plates with will do so for us. Each of us could spend hours telling you heart warming stories about our loved one and how many times we are asked about their sign or what our license plates mean. This is one of the ways we will, as a State and Country, always remember and never forget them or their Legacies.

Please support our Heroes and we urge your endorsement and support of House Bill 3000 & House Bill 3001

V/R

Gold Star Father

Wendall L. Pelham II