

Dick Tobiason, Chairman  
LTC US Army, Retired  
Bend Heroes Foundation  
1900 NE 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Ste 106, #205  
Bend, OR 97701

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RE: HB 2344: "Requires the Department of Veterans' Affairs to keep the World War II memorial located in the Capitol Mall up to date and maintain an educational tool as part of the memorial."

I am Dick Tobiason, Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation, a retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel and combat wounded Vietnam veteran.

Thank you, Chair Tran, Vice Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Lewis and distinguished committee members for this opportunity to testify to the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans in support of HB 2344 and Amendments 1 and 2.

Bend Heroes Foundation made a significant donation to the Oregon WWII Memorial on behalf of WWII Honor Flight veterans the Foundation took on trips to Washington, DC, Oregon's 150,000 WWII Veterans honored by the WWII Memorial Highway (US Hwy 97) we initiated with this Committee, and Foundation Director Robert D. "Bob" Maxwell, a WWII Medal of Honor recipient. Mr. Maxwell was a special guest at the Memorial's dedication and his name and Bend Heroes Foundation are engraved on a monument there. This Committee could thus expect our sincere interest in updating and maintaining the magnificent WWII Memorial.

Over the last 3 years I have sent multiple letters to ODVA Directors requesting 164 Oregonians by name be added to the WWII Memorial. The 164 names are listed in 9 broad categories:

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>MISSING NAMES</b>
MIAS (UNACCOUNTED FOR)	69
ACCOUNTED FOR MIAS	5
POWS	10
CIVILIANS WAKE ISLAND	31
CIVILIAN WAR CORRESPONDENTS	2
BURIALS AT ABMC CEMETERIES	31
BURIED AT SEA	8
USCG	5
NISEI	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>164</b>

I also recommended creation of a new searchable website to replace the deleted website which listed the names on the memorial. Hopefully the “educational tool” in HB 2344 will accomplish that. My Oct.5, 2022 14 page final report sent to ODVA Director Kelly Fitzpatrick is available for review.

I made those recommendations based on this statement on the WWII Memorial dedication plaque: **“Dedicated this 6<sup>th</sup> day of June 2014 to all Oregonians who faithfully served both here at home and overseas during WW II”** (my emphasis added)

ODVA informed me they have another 250 names to add to the memorial. That would be about 380 names or about 10% of the existing names could be added. That means 90% of Oregon’s WWII Veterans were honored when the memorial was dedicated almost 11 years ago.

The existing memorial honors 3,771 Oregonians “Killed in Action” according to a plaque at the memorial. The names are listed on 10 panels at 400 names per panel. Civilian names are not included.

As ODVA in the original HB 2344 did not intend to honor civilians, I requested this Committee to honor the 31 Wake Island civilians via HCR 23 which was passed by this Committee on March 13 and by the House on March 18.

If adopted, Amendments 1 and 2 would allow names of certain civilians including the Wake Island contract civilians to be engraved on the Oregon WWII as peers of their military counterparts. “or a recognition” (page 2, line 2) and “or otherwise recognized” (page 2, lines 10, 11) in Amendment 1 could allow ODVA to decide not to engrave the civilian names on the memorial. Line 11: “if military records” should be changed to “if federal records” such as NARA, DOD, ABMC, VA, and DPAA. I urge the Committee to delete “or a recognition” and “or otherwise recognized” from Amendment 1 and substitute “federal” for “military”.

Amendments 1 and 2 should be revised to .... “recognized by the federal government including the U.S. Congress, ABMC, DPAA, National Archives, DOD, Military Services, and Veterans Administration”.....

I thank Representative Lewis for introducing the needed amendments.

Salem’s Associated Press War Correspondent Asahel Bush was killed during the October 25, 1944 Japanese bombing attack in the Philippines. He was awarded a Purple Heart and laid to rest in ABMC’s Manila American Cemetery.

Salem’s New York Herald Tribune War Correspondent Ralph Barnes was killed in an airplane accident in what is now Montenegro. He was the first of 38 WWII war correspondents to die. He was laid to rest in ABMC’s Florence American Cemetery in Italy.

Correspondent Bush's service and sacrifice would be recognized with his name on the WWII Memorial as he satisfies the new criteria of Amendment 1.

Correspondent Barnes would likewise be honored only if HB 2344 included accidental deaths anywhere.

The Wake Island civilians, 2 war correspondents who died "in theater", and 2 WASPs who died in stateside accidents should be included in the educational tool proposed in HB 2344. The 6 civilians killed by a Japanese balloon bomb in Bly, Oregon should also be included in the educational tool – they are already named on "The Japanese" plaque at the memorial and on a memorial near Bly.

The "Oregon Non-Battle Losses" plaque at the memorial includes an inadequate description of Oregon's Wake Island civilian contractors. As we testified to HCR 23 last month, they certainly were not non-battle losses. We again offer to help ODVA correct that plaque and its QR code.

While HB 2344 will see more veterans honored on the Oregon WWII Memorial, some veterans who died will not be honored as the "service member", "Killed in Action", and "in theater" criteria precludes some from being honored. For example, 5 Oregon Coast Guardsmen who were killed aboard the "USS Serpens" at Guadalcanal (in theater) when their ammunition ship exploded are not named on the memorial. An investigation concluded enemy action was not involved – it was an accident. The 5 are included in my list of 165 names. They are not honored on the WWII Memorial probably because their deaths were not KIA. However, they are honored with others on a large memorial at Arlington National Cemetery near the Pentagon. Certainly, they would be honored on the WWII Memorial if the criteria is revised to include deaths by accident anywhere.

In contrast,<sup>14</sup> Oregon Merchant Mariners were killed when an ammunition ship accidentally exploded at Port Chicago, California. Their names are included on the memorial even though they do not meet the "in theater" and "Killed in Action" criteria. A plaque at the memorial describes the horrific accident claiming 320 lives.

ODVA's criteria in HB 2344 does not include deaths due to "Died Non Battle" (accidents, disease) and "FOD" (Finding of Death). The criteria should be revised to include all deaths, no matter the cause to be consistent with "all" in the dedication plaque statement. All lives lost anywhere during service to our state and nation during declared war deserve to be honored.

Oregon's WWII Medal of Honor recipient Army Pvt Elmer E. Fryar who was KIA and remains MIA is honored with his name engraved on the WWII Memorial. I requested ODVA to add his name to the Medal of Honor Memorial on its property. While ODVA agreed to add Fryar's name, I have not been informed on progress. I made a similar request to the Oregon State Capitol Foundation to add Fryar to the Oregon Medal of Honor Memorial at the state Capitol building. The Foundation advised me it will honor Fryar after construction at the Capitol building is completed.

With regard to the “educational tool”, I again urge ODVA to identify war dead POWs, MIAs, ABMC burials, Bataan Death March, Nisei, Wake Island civilians, War Correspondents, and WASPs by category, symbols and footnotes. For example, almost half (49.5%) of Oregon’s reported 3,771 WWII war dead were laid to rest overseas (982) or are still MIA overseas (884). Because their remains are not in Oregon, their families cannot honor them on Memorial Day, Veterans Day, National Wreaths Across America Day, birthdays, etc. They can visit the WWII Memorial if living nearby or search the proposed “educational tool” as a meaningful substitute. That little known information should be included in the “educational tool”.

The Oregon Fallen War Heroes Memorial in Central Point, OR lists the names of about 6,000 war dead from the Civil War to the present. The memorial was created by the late Dennis Richardson, Vietnam Veteran, State Representative, and Secretary of State. The names on the granite monuments can also be found on that memorial’s searchable website. It is known that the Central Point WWII listing does not completely agree with the names on the Salem memorial. The Central Point memorial should be referenced in the ODVA educational tool and vice versa.

While there are many war memorials in Salem, ODVA does not have a website listing names of all war dead as does the Central Point memorial. ODVA should develop “educational tools” for all wars.

According to the National WWII Museum in New Orleans and the Department of Veterans Affairs, only 1,400 WWII Veterans are living in Oregon meaning 99% of Oregon’s 146,633 WWII veterans have passed away. ODVA should complete its update of the WWII Memorial well before the last WWII Veteran passes and unveil the added names and “educational tool” in a public ceremony.

With HB 2344 and revised amendments becoming law, I am more hopeful ODVA will finally act on my recommendations and update the memorial expeditiously.

Time is of the essence to act to fully and finally honor Oregon’s Greatest Generation before it has completely vanished!

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2344 and Amendments 1 and 2.

I would be pleased to respond to your questions.

I respectfully urge a Do Pass recommendation.