



Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
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Creating a Highway to Honor the Purple Heart

August 7, 2021 was National Purple Heart Day. Currently, the Purple Heart Medal, per regulation, is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to any member of the Armed Forces of the United States who, while serving with one of the U.S. Armed Services after April 5, 1917 has been wounded, killed, or has died after being wounded by enemy action.

The Purple Heart originated as the Badge of Military Merit, established by General George Washington, when he served as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, by his order on August 7, 1782. The Badge of Military Merit was only awarded to three Revolutionary War soldiers. For unknown reasons, the medal was not awarded again, but it was not abolished. General Douglas MacArthur signed General Order No. 3 on February 22, 1932, the 200th Anniversary of George Washington's birth, creating the modern Purple Heart. It is the nation's oldest military award, and although the criteria have been modified several times, the recipients are those who have been wounded in battle or made the ultimate sacrifice defending our freedoms.

An estimated 1.8 million Purple Hearts have been awarded, but consistent records were not kept until 1932. It is one of the most respected medals in the U.S. Armed Forces.

State Representative Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) and State Senator Howard Marklein have authored legislation to designate Wisconsin State Highway 21 as a Purple Heart Memorial Highway. This bill, (AB) 339 and (SB) 345, was drafted at the request of veterans from the Necedah Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 10231 and directs the Department of Transportation to designate the 123.4 miles of State Highway 21 from Sparta to Oshkosh as a "Purple Heart Memorial Highway" and to erect a permanent memorial marker along the route to identify its designation.

The bill has been referred to the Committee on Transportation and Local Government, so more to come on this.

President Biden Signs (PAWS) Act into Law: On August 25th, VFW-supported H.R. 1448, the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers or PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act was signed into law by President Biden. This legislation establishes a 5-year pilot program to provide canine training therapy for eligible veterans diagnosed with PTSD and require VA to provide service dogs for those veterans, including veterinary insurance. VA must launch the program by 2022 in at least five VA medical facilities, which will then partner with community non-profits. VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Tammy Barlet noted that studies and anecdotal evidence indicate veterans diagnosed with PTSD who have service dogs experience increased participation in social settings and overall satisfaction with life.

“Don’t FUDGE on Care for Veterans” as we’re “Soaring Above & Beyond”

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