



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update

By Senator Howard Marklein

August 6, 2021

Creating a Highway to Honor the Purple Heart

August 7, 2021 is 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 has been modified several times, the recipients are those who have been wounded in battle or made the ultimate sacrifice defending our freedoms.

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

Representative Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) and I have authored legislation to designate State Highway 21 as a Purple Heart Memorial Highway. We drafted this bill at the request of veterans with the Necedah Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post. Assembly Bill (AB) 339 and Senate Bill (SB) 345 will designate the 123.4 miles of State Highway 21 from Sparta to Oshkosh as a Purple Heart Memorial Highway, passing through Necedah along the way.

There already is another Purple Heart Memorial Highway and it happens to be in the 17th Senate District. It is US Highway 14 from Richland Center to the Minnesota state line. According to the Department of Transportation (DOT), Wisconsin has more than 40 memorial highways and bridges to honor individuals, veterans and other groups.

I support commemorative highways and bridges because they give us a fantastic opportunity to recognize and remember the history of our communities. They create an opening for a conversation with our children and grandchildren as we travel throughout the state.

I believe designating Hwy 21 as a Purple Heart Highway is a worthy tribute and commemoration. I appreciate the service and sacrifices made by the men and women who have given their time, talent and even their life in defense of our freedoms.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have input, ideas or need assistance with any state-related matters.

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