

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



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Sponsor Statement for CSHB 61

Honoring Veterans Who Have Earned Medals for Valor in Combat by Creating License Plates
Reflecting Those Medals

This bill is the result of veterans expressing concern that current law does not allow combat veterans to receive license plates for medals they have received for many of the highest orders of sacrifice. The bill adds a number of medals that shall be reflected in specialty plates, and, in the event award names change or are added, prevents the need for future license plate bills by authorizing the Division of Motor Vehicles to add license plates for a medal of valor at the request of a medal recipient. That way, by statute, veterans may be honored for any medal for valor they receive.

The Division of Motor Vehicles currently provides a license plate for the military's highest honor, the Medal of Honor. The Department of Motor Vehicles also recognizes veterans with a veteran's plate, and honors veterans who qualify for a Purple Heart, Gold Star Family, POW, Pearl Harbor survivor, and unit-specific specialty license plates.

But the Division does not allow recipients of medals license plates that reflect their sacrifice for other high honors demonstrating valor. These honors include the Navy Cross (also awarded to Marines), the Distinguished Service Cross, the Air Force Cross, the Coast Guard Cross, the Silver Star and the Bronze Star for Valor. The department testified they have the power to add plates for those who have received "unit" honors - like the Presidential Unit - which is earned when a whole unit engages in valor in combat. This bill allows honors like the Presidential Unit and any newly created combat valor awards to be issued by the Division of Motor Vehicles.

With this bill we recognize the sacrifice and heroism of these individuals.