

SB

216

SFIN

FILE

I want to personally thank each and everyone one of you for taking the time out of your busy workload to work on the Purple Heart Trail issue (SB216/HB283). I have sort of made this a personal crusade and I have been working hard on this issue for about a year now. It is a real joy to see it moving forward in the legislative process. I can assure you that Alaska veterans are gaining a sincere and larger appreciation for the work that you "our Juneau supporters" are putting forth for veterans. Please continue with your caring efforts and don't let them down.

Representative Gardner and Senator Ellis have gone out of their way to help me get this going and I am so very appreciative for their devoted assistance. I want to extend that appreciation to those of you who now have this issue before you and I want to thank you in advance for your future endeavors on behalf of our wounded combat vets.

I firmly believe that the Purple Heart Trail will do two things: one it will establish a visible honor for "ALL" wounded and deceased combat veterans, and two it will provide visual proof to all who travel the Purple Heart Trail that Alaska not only cares but that we show we care.

The Purple Heart Trail already exists in 42 other states as well as Guam. I just want Alaska to be part of something very special. I submit that the many Alcan travelers who see these signs, and know or be related to someone who was killed or wounded in battle, will be very appreciative to Alaska for showing that we care.

On behalf of our wounded combat vets I thank you for your support and I anxiously await the day this important legislation is passed in Juneau.

My phone number is 907/562-4254.
My email address is rona:ph@oci.net

Once again, thank you so very kindly;

Yours in Patriotism;
Ron Siebels
MOPH, Alaska

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senate Labor and Commerce
Committee, Chair

Legislative Budget and Audit
Committee

Senate Rules Committee

Committee on Committees



While in Session
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Juneau, AK 99801
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While in Anchorage
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SENATOR JOHNNY ELLIS
SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

Sponsor Statement SB 216: Purple Heart Trail

The Purple Heart medal is a United States military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those who have been wounded or killed in service to their country. SB 216 seeks to recognize and honor recipients by establishing a Purple Heart Trail in Alaska.

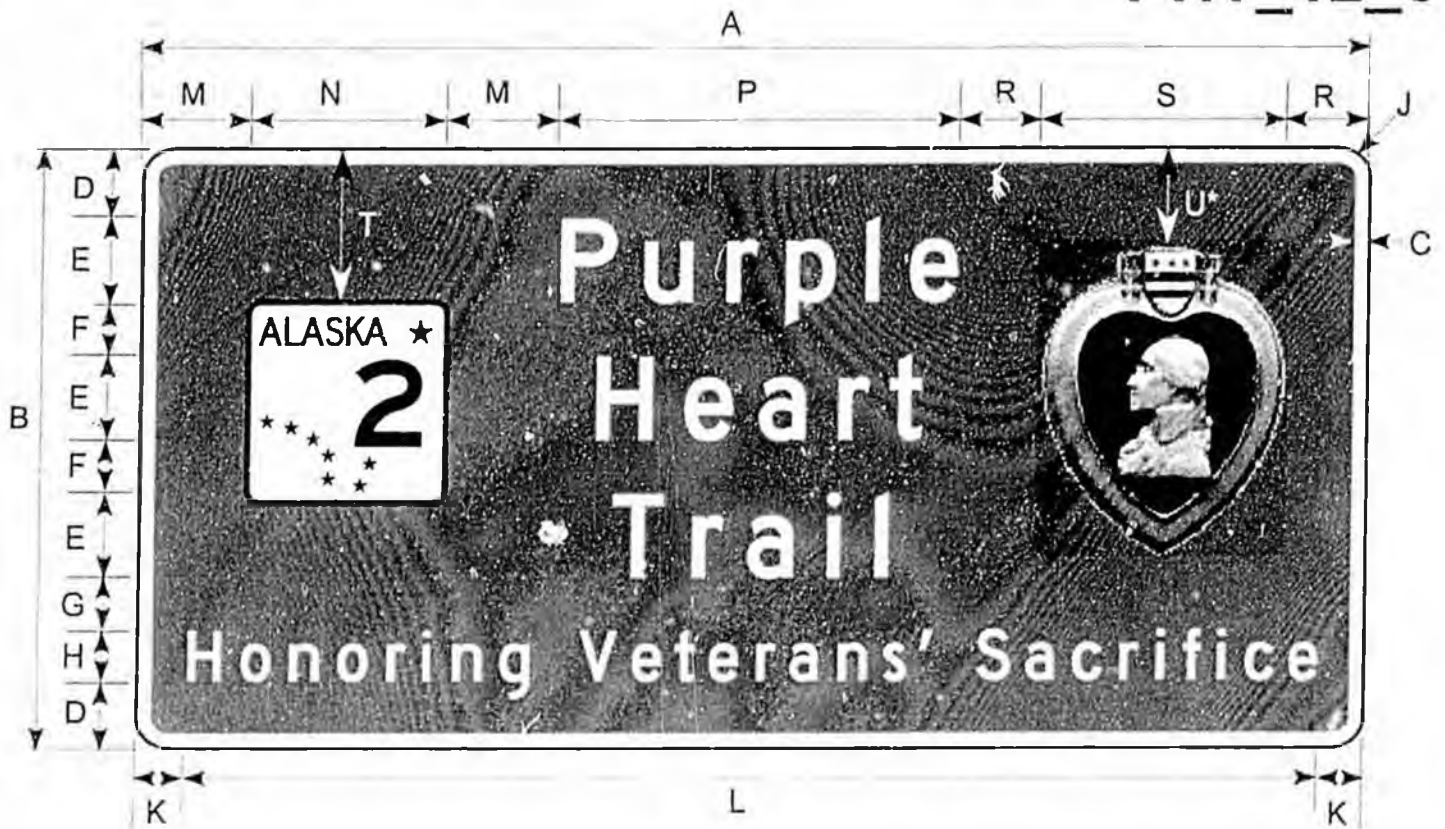
The Purple Heart Trail is a national project to designate portions of the interstate highway system as "The Purple Heart Trail System", reminding Americans of the sacrifices made by their men and women in uniform. The original Purple Heart Trail was established in the Commonwealth of Virginia at Mt. Vernon and runs the length of the Virginia Highway.

Today, the Purple Heart Trail extends across the nation. Signage drawing attention to the designation is placed at appropriate intervals along the highways to stimulate thought and discussion among adults and children alike in contemplating the history of this nation, and those who have sacrificed for it.

Alaska's participation in this national effort is long overdue. We have a strong military tradition; an estimated 73,000 resident veterans, approximately 25,000 active duty military, and more serving in the National Guard. In recent months, many returning Alaskan soldiers have been honored with the Purple Heart Medal.

The Alaska Highway, completed during World War II by the US Army to serve as a supply route, is an apt choice for the designation as "Purple Heart Trail System". Signs designating the Purple Heart Trail will be seen by both visitors and residents alike and will demonstrate that Alaska recognizes and honors the sacrifices made by our wounded and fallen soldiers.

Please join me in supporting the establishment of a Purple Heart Trail in Alaska.

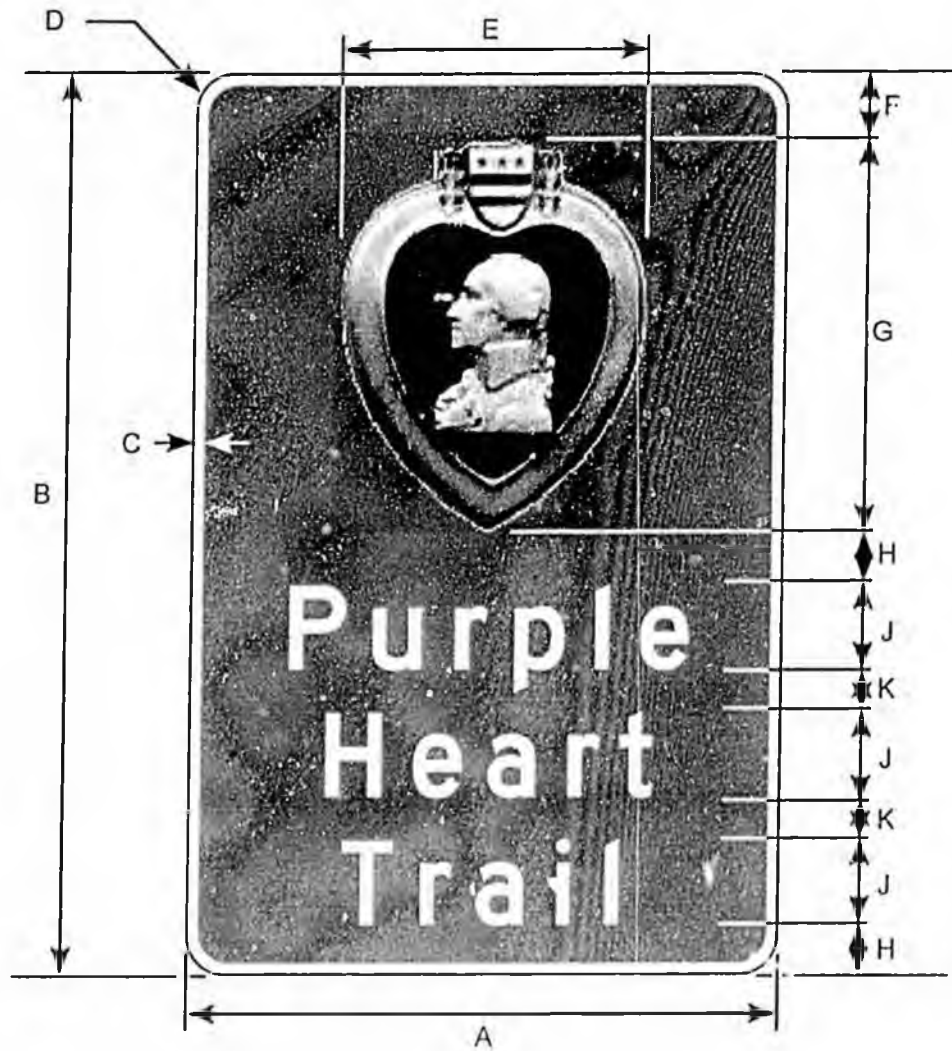


Legend: White
 Background: Green
 Route Plaque: Black on White

Make symbol proportional
 to graphic shown.

Road Class	Dimensions (inches)								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J
Expressway	120	72	2	8	10	6	8	6	4
	K	L	M	N	P	R	S	T	U*
	5.75	138.5	13.25	24	49.5	10	30	18	11.75

* Proportionately scale Purple Heart Emblem to 30" wide



Border and Legend: White
 Background: Green
 Marker: Black on White

* See Appendix B-4 for
 Standard Arrow Details.

Make symbol proportional to graphic shown

Letter Size (inches)	Dimensions (inches)										
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	
5	36	54	0.75	2.25	1.92	4	24	3	5	2.5	



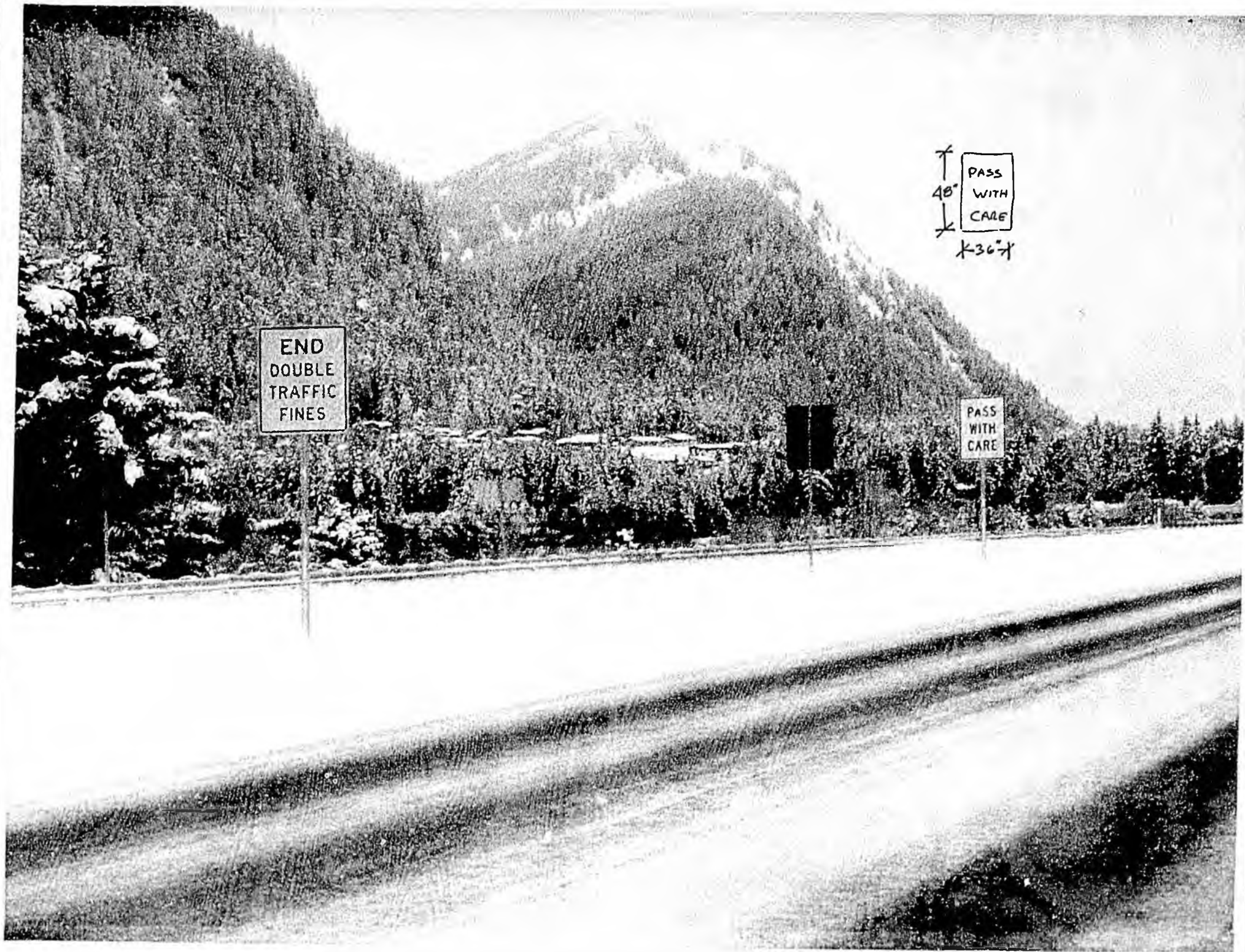


END
DOUBLE
TRAFFIC
FINES

PASS
WITH
CARE

↑
48"
↓
↑ 36" ↓

PASS
WITH
CARE



FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2008 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: 1
Bill Version: CSSB 216(TRA)
(S) Publish Date: 2/8/08

Identifier (file name): SB 216-DOT-NDE-02-06-08 Dept. Affected: DOT&PF
Title: Act Designating AK Hwy/Richardson Hwy as the Purple Heart RDU: Highways and Aviation
Component: Northern Region Hwys and Aviation
Sponsor: Senator Ellis
Requester: Senate Transportation Component Number: 2068

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	Appropriation Required	Information					
	FY 2009	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014
Personal Services							
Travel							
Contractual	150.0						
Supplies							
Equipment							
Land & Structures							
Grants & Claims							
Miscellaneous							
TOTAL OPERATING	150.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
CAPITAL EXPENDITURES							
CHANGE IN REVENUES ()	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts							
1003 GF Match							
1004 GF	150.0						
1005 GF/Program Receipts							
1037 GF/Mental Health							
Other Interagency Receipts							
TOTAL	150.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2008) cost: _____

POSITIONS

Full-time	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0
Part-time	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Temporary	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Installation of six (6) major signs (approx 5'x12'), six (6) minor signs (4.5'x3'), and three (3) informational kiosks along locations on the Richardson and Alaska Highways. The cost for initial installation includes the concrete foundations and crash supports that breakway in an accident. A contractor will install these signs under the direction of the Department.

Prepared by: Mary Sireky
Division: DOT&PF, Commissioner's Office
Approved by: Nancy Skagle
Director of Division of Administration

Phone: 465-4772
Date/Time: 2/6/08 2:00 PM
Date: 2/6/2008

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Senate Labor and Commerce
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SENATOR JOHNNY ELLIS
SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 8, 2008

TO: Senator Bert Stedman
Senate Finance Committee Co-Chair

FROM: Senator Johnny Ellis

RE: Explanation of changes to SB 216 – Purple Heart Trail

These changes were made in consultation with the Department of Transportation.

SB 216
25-LS1280\A

CS SB 216 (TRA)
25-LS1280\C

- Sets minimum sign size at 20" X 30"
- Requires signs to be placed at terminus of highway and every 50 miles throughout

- Allows DOT to determine the most appropriate sign size
- Designates Fairbanks, Delta Junction, Tok Junction, and the Canadian border for large signs with smaller signs at the midpoints
- Specifies content of informational pullout displays

Municipality
of
Anchorage



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Telephone: (907) 343-4431
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<http://www.muni.org>

Mark Begich, Mayor

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

January 4, 2008

Senator Johnny Ellis
State Capitol, Room 9
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Letter of Support

Dear Senator Ellis:


The purpose of this letter is to express our unconditional support of the initiative of Chapter 593 of the Military Order of the Purple Heart to secure Alaska's participation in the National Purple Heart Trail System. The idea of designating major highways as portions of a National Purple Heart Trail originated in Virginia in 1992. Since that time, the trail has extended with designations across much of the Lower 48.

The Interstate Highway System, seen as a tangible symbol of our freedom -- the ability to get up and go anywhere, anytime -- provides an opportunity for a visible and poignant reminder of the sacrifices of Americans who have shed blood to protect our freedom. For those states that participate in this trail system, a simple highway designation with appropriate signage does just that.

Given the significant military population in our Great State and the many thousands of veterans who make Alaska home, we see our participation in this program as both a fitting tribute to serving military and our veterans and as an important reminder of their service and sacrifice. To all who travel Alaska's stretch of the Purple Heart Trail, our participation in this designation program says we recognize the sacrifice, we care about those who do and have served our country and we remember freedom is not free.

We strongly encourage your support of this important initiative.

Sincerely,


Cdt. Gregory Miller (Ret)
Chairman

Anchorage Military & Veterans Commission



RESOLUTION 2008-05

A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE STATE OF ALASKA DESIGNATE THE ALASKA HIGHWAY AS A "PURPLE HEART TRAIL" WITHIN THE ALASKA ROAD SYSTEM

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper to never forget those who have given their lives and shed their blood in defense of this great nation; and

WHEREAS, a Purple Heart Trail system has been established throughout the major road system of the lower 48 states; and

WHEREAS, Alaska is geographically located at the far northwest reaches of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, it is in the interest of Alaska's citizens, Alaska's veterans, and Alaska's tourism industry to be part of the Purple Heart Trail system; and

WHEREAS, Alaska is proud to join this worthy effort in providing America with the ability to establish this Purple Heart Trail all across America; and

WHEREAS, the placement of signs indicating "Purple Heart Trail" will simply indicate a part of a nationally existing system; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of the Purple Heart Trail within Alaska will in no way change the name or numerical designation of any existing road; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Highway has a well established historical military significance since it was built during the WWII era for military purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Highway is the best choice to establish and continue the Purple Heart Trail into the confines of the Alaska Road System.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The City Council for the City of Delta Junction by this resolution hereby requests the State of Alaska provide for the signage and placement of the Purple Heart Trail signs at approximately 50 mile intervals along the corridor of the Alaska Highway system within Alaska beginning at Beaver Creek and extending on to Delta Junction; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT: In order to inform all travelers, a sign designating the purpose for the Purple Heart Trail also be placed with the Purple Heart Trail signs at strategic locations such as entering or leaving the vicinities of Beaver Creek, Northway, Tok, Dot Lake, and Delta Junction; that explains the reason for the Purple Heart Trail; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT: The designated note of purpose signs read as follows:

*IN HONOR OF THOSE BRAVE PATRIOTS
WHO SHED THEIR BLOOD
WHILE ENGAGED IN THE SELFLESS ACT OF
DEFENDING OUR NATIONS FREEDOM*

PASSED AND APPROVED by a duly constituted quorum of the Delta Junction City Council this 4th day of December 2007.



CITY OF DELTA JUNCTION

Mary Leith-Dowling
Mary Leith-Dowling, Mayor

ATTEST

Pat White

Pat White, City Clerk



Tok Chamber of Commerce
"Main Street Alaska"
PO Box 389
Tok, Alaska 99780
907-883-5775

Fax: 907-883-5774
<http://www.tokalaska.info>

TO: State of Alaska
Senator Ted Stevens
Senator Johnny Ellis
Representative Don Young
Representative Berta Gardner

We are proud to offer our strong support for Alaska to be a part of the "Purple Heart Trail". We think its simple visible message is well deserved by those who bravely gave so much of themselves in defending this nation.

This worthy project can be of great benefit to our community and the State of Alaska. We believe that those who see the signs will have a better understanding of the sacrifices made by those who wear the Purple Heart. We believe that the traveling public, whether Alaskans or visitors, will realize that we care about our wounded veterans. We further believe that the signs will bear witness that we in Alaska not only care about our wounded veterans, but we are willing to put forth the effort to visibly display our deepest fondness for their sacrifice.

Many who travel our roads will surely know or be related to a wounded veteran or a veteran who lost their life in defense of our nation. The warm feeling they obtain will certainly be in their minds as they traverse the roads of our great state. By showing them we care we can instill a kind Alaskan memory of their travels, and hopefully we will see them again.

Be it known to all that the community of TOK Alaska will be proud to be part of the Purple Heart Trail. We support it and we encourage all Alaskans to support it as well.

Sincerely yours,

John A. Rusyniak, President
Home 883-3124; Cell 206-724-4591; E Fax 305-425-7901
Email: john@rusyniak.com

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20 wounded soldiers receive Purple Heart

Twenty with combat injuries honored for 'warrior spirit'

By **GEORGE BRYSON**
gbryson@adn.com

Published: October 17, 2007

Last Modified: October 17, 2007 at 12:55 PM

Twenty Purple Heart medals rested in the serving tray Tuesday while 19 Fort Richardson-based soldiers wounded in Iraq stood at attention as best they could -- some leaning on canes, one missing a leg, a few with injuries to the head.



[Click to enlarge](#)

One by one the medals were pinned on their chests by Maj. Gen. Stephen Layfield, the senior Army commander in Alaska, who sternly told about 200 onlookers to "never ever miss the chance to say thank you" to the men - all of whom are members of the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division.

The ways they were injured were as varied as their wounds. Some were riding in vehicles that were blasted apart by projectiles. Some were hit by roadside bombs. Some were walking on patrols and shot by

unseen snipers.

But Staff Sgt. Chad LeBlanc, of Anchorage, may have had the most unusual tale to tell. He was stationed at an outpost south of Baghdad and was just preparing to lie down for the night inside his "can" -- a small mobile trailer just large enough for two bunks -- when he heard the sound of mortar fire outside.

Sticking his head out the door, LeBlanc just had time to see a mortar round blast into



ERIK HILL / Anchorage Daily News
[enlarge](#)

Staff Sgt. Chad LeBlanc of Anchorage receives his Purple Heart medal from Maj. Gen. Stephen Layfield, senior Army commander in Alaska, as 19 soldiers assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division received their medals Tuesday at Fort Richardson.

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neighboring trailer -- one that was usually occupied by his buddy, Sgt. 1st Class Joshua Ferguson, who just then was away on leave in Alaska.

Shrapnel from the blast hit LeBlanc in the stomach and limbs and burnt his face and arms. Before falling into shock, he managed to find help.

"I ran about 25 meters to where the medics were and laid down on the ground and told them what happened," he recalled. "Then they put me on a helicopter, I went to Baghdad -- and that was it."

In an operating room, doctors removed 14 pieces of shrapnel from LeBlanc's arm and a big chunk from his side. The shrapnel that entered his stomach had to be removed through his back -- an operation that has since made the 32-year-old Alaskan less mobile.

He knows it could have been worse. He could have been inside the trailer that took the direct hit -- Ferguson's trailer. As it happened, however, his buddy didn't make it through their deployment unscathed either.

Returning to their unit -- a team within the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion that trains Iraqi army forces -- Ferguson was badly wounded about five weeks later when his vehicle was struck by an armor-piercing projectile.

The blast tore up his lower legs and shattered his left knee. Ultimately the leg would have to be amputated. On Tuesday, Ferguson was standing in the ranks with the other Purple Heart recipients, supported by a cane and a prosthetic leg.

"I set a record getting out of Walter Reed (Medical Center) for an amputee," Ferguson said, noting how anxious he was to return to Fort Richardson and his family. Now he's hoping to remain in the military -- he's served 11 years so far -- and in Alaska.

"If I could stay here until I retire in nine years, that would be perfect," he said.

Spc. William Swails, a native of Rockingham, N.C. -- who received his second Purple Heart on Tuesday after suffering shrapnel wounds to his hand and arm -- is hoping to remain on active duty in Alaska too. His wife, Chastity, is currently enrolled in the nursing program at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Spc. Justin Taurainen, who grew up in Anchorage -- and returned by motor home to a large throng of friends and family greeting him at the Muldoon overpass last week -- received a Purple Heart as well.

On May 21, his armored engineer vehicle was struck by "multiple IEDS," the improvised explosive devices his unit was charged with removing. Taurainen, 23, sustained shrapnel wounds to his head, back, hands and legs.

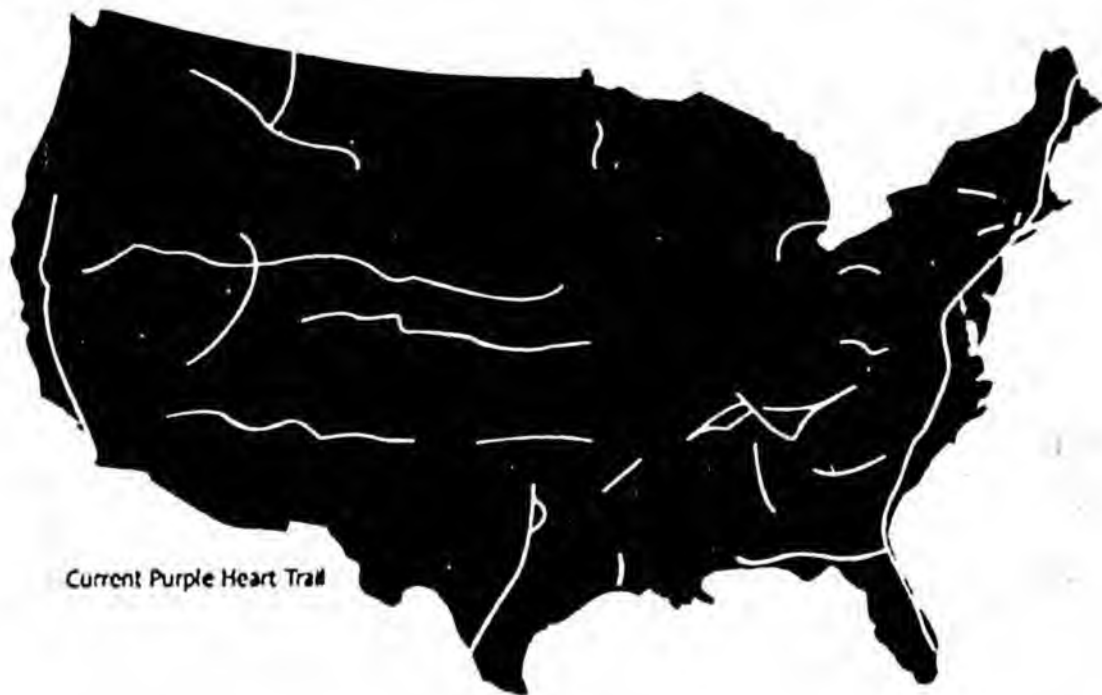
Before pinning the medals on the assembled soldiers -- Sgt. Casey Wright of Tucson, Ariz., was unable to attend the ceremony -- Layfield emphasized their collective bravery.

"We're forever in your debt," he said. "We acknowledge your sacrifice and we acknowledge your warrior spirit and we acknowledge what you did for our country."

Find George Bryson online at adn.com/contact/gbryson or call 257-4318.

<http://www.purpleheart.org/purple-heart-trail.html>

Purple Heart Trail was initially established in the Commonwealth of Virginia from its start point at Mt. Vernon, VA. Through positive legislative support of the Virginia General Assembly and through the leadership of two of its governors, The Honorable George Allen (now U.S. Senator) and incumbent Governor James Gilmore the trail now extends down Virginia highway 235 (the Mt. Vernon Parkway) to US Route #1, thence to I-95. All of I-95 is designated the Purple Heart Trail from the Potomac River in Alexandria, on the Maryland border, down to the State of North Carolina. It branches off at Fredericksburg on Virginia Highway 3 (the Kings Highway) to Stafford County and thence to the George Washington Birthplace National Monument in Westmoreland County, VA. Another leg goes eastward on I-64 at Richmond, the state capital, to the city of Norfolk. The Virginia Department of Transportation has placed 'Purple Heart Trail' signs at all rest stops on I-95 and I-64 and at other special points along the total trail.



Current Purple Heart Trail

Ultimately, the Purple Heart Trail will be extended from Virginia to all other states and major cities of the United States. Historically, the Purple Heart Trail concept was inspired by the George Washington Chapter #1732 of Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania, VA, in 1992. In convention of the Order, the delegates voted to approve a resolution establishing a symbolic Purple Heart Trail throughout the 50 states. With the Commonwealth of Virginia being the home of the two distinguished general officers involved in the development of the Purple Heart, Generals Washington and MacArthur, the Department of Virginia members of the Order took the lead to institute The Purple Heart Trail in Virginia, with a memorial marker to be erected and dedicated at Mt. Vernon as the start point of the trail.

In 1996, the General Assembly of the Commonwealth approved the first step in establishing the Purple Heart Trail parallel to I-95 and that portion of Virginia Route 3 from Washington's birthplace in Westmoreland County, VA, to his boyhood home at

<http://www.purpleheart.org/purple-heart-trail.html>

Ferry Farm in Stafford County, VA. In 1998, through subsequently legislative fiat, the trail was extended to Norfolk, VA, ending at the tomb of General Douglas MacArthur on Interstate 64 from Richmond (I-95) to Norfolk and to Mt. Vernon. The purpose of the Purple Heart Trail is to commemorate the patriotic American heritage given to us by George Washington and General MacArthur and for the people of Virginia, and ultimately all the states, to memorialize those service persons who have had the Purple Heart medal bestowed on them or their next of kin for wounds received in combat in defense of our nation.



By marking these trails with appropriate signage, it was conceived that the automobile and the Interstate Highway System represent very tangible symbols of our freedom; the ability to get up and go anywhere anytime. While taken for granted by so many, this and so many other freedoms we enjoy as Americans have been earned through the sacrifice of millions of Americans who have shed their blood and the many who have died in defense of freedom and liberty. The signage was intended as a reminder that freedom is not free and would stimulate thought and discussion among adults and children alike in contemplating the bountiful heritage enjoyed by all Americans as part of their legacy.

Major highways are the ideal setting for this virtual trail, and ultimately, the Military Order of the Purple Heart would like to see the entire Interstate Highway System, conceived by General Dwight D. Eisenhower during his tenure as President of the United States, designated as major portions of the Purple Heart Trail. Instructional kits have been developed and are in the hands of all Department Commanders on how to initiate necessary legislation in their respective states to implement the continued growth of the Purple Heart Trail System.

National Commander Louie Spinelli has accepted expansion of the trail as a major thrust of his leadership during his term of office. We who are on the forefront of this great effort, can take great pride in establishing this system as a most noble and patriotic endeavor of the Military Order of the Purple Heart that will become an indelible part of our continuing service to this great nation. If your state is not yet on board, we encourage all local chapters to take this up within the scope of their Americanism projects. Most legislatures have been found to be most receptive in support of legislative initiatives required to implement the program. The mood of the country is also such that many salons would welcome the opportunity to offer the necessary legislative language to make it happen. God Bless America, our home, sweet home!