

**HB**

**274**

# Alaska State Legislature



## Chairman

State Affairs Committee

## Member

Judiciary Committee  
Labor & Commerce Committee  
Health & Social Services Committee  
Military & Veterans Affairs Committee

## Finance Subcommittees

Labor and Workforce Development  
Military and Veterans' Affairs  
Public Safety

*A Communication From*  
**REPRESENTATIVE BOB LYNN**  
**District 31 Anchorage**

**E-Mail:** Representative\_Bob\_Lynn@legis.state.ak.us  
**"Bob Lynn's Alaska Blog"** www.RepLynnBlog.com

## Session:

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The House State Affairs Committee has agreed to waive the State Affairs referral for HB 274, "Establishing Purple Heart Day." Signature and agreement to waive does not constitute support or opposition to the bill, nor obligate the member to a specific vote on the House Floor.

Handwritten signature of Bob Lynn.

Rep. Bob Lynn, Chair

Handwritten signature of Paul Seaton.

Rep. Paul Seaton, Vice Chair

Handwritten signature of Craig Johnson.

Rep. Craig Johnson

Handwritten signature of Peggy Wilson.

Rep. Peggy Wilson

Handwritten signature of Carl Gatto.

Rep. Carl Gatto

Handwritten signature of Max Gruenberg.

Rep. Max Gruenberg

Handwritten signature of Pete Petersen.

Rep. Pete Petersen

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



**Representatives Nancy Dahlstrom, Berta Gardner, Bob Buch, Wes Keller, Pete Petersen, Bob Lynn, Carl Gatto, Chris Tuck, Mike Doogan, Bill Thomas, Mike Hawker, David Guttenberg, Jay Ramras, Anna Fairclough, Craig Johnson, Charisse Millet, Bob Herron**

To: Representative Bob Lynn  
House State Affairs Committee, Chair

From: Representative Nancy Dahlstrom  
Representative Berta Gardner

Date: February 3, 2010

Re: Hearing Request for HB 274

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I am respectfully requesting that House Bill 274, "An Act establishing August 7 as Purple Heart Day " be scheduled for a hearing in the House State Affairs Committee at your earliest convenience.

The Purple Heart is awarded to United States service men and women who have been either wounded or killed in battle. Approximately 1.7 million service men and women, including many Alaskans, have received the Purple Heart. Currently, there are about 500,000 Purple Heart recipients who are living. In designating each August 7 as Purple Heart Day, we honor those who have received our oldest military medal on the day of its inception.

Included in this packet:

- A Current Version of HB 274
- Sponsor Statement
- Backup Information
- Letters of Support

If necessary, other backup will be forthcoming. Please contact Representative Dahlstrom's staffer Laura Pierre at 465-3783 or Representative Gardner's staffer Ellie Sica at 465-4930.

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



**Representatives Nancy Dahlstrom, Berta Gardner, Bob Buch, Wes Keller, Pete Petersen, Bob Lynn, Carl Gatto, Chris Tuck, Mike Doogan, Bill Thomas, Mike Hawker, David Guttenberg, Jay Ramras, Anna Fairclough, Craig Johnson, Charisse Millet, Bob Herron**

## Sponsor Statement HB 274

*"An Act establishing August 7 as Purple Heart Day."*

On August 7, 1782, General George Washington established the Badge of Military Merit to honor military enlisted men and noncommissioned officers. This badge was only awarded to three Revolutionary War soldiers before its use was discontinued after the war. In 1932, on Washington's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, the United States reinstated the Badge of Military Merit renaming it the "Purple Heart."

Throughout its history the Purple Heart has been awarded for meritorious service. With the introduction of the Legion of Merit in 1942, the award of the Purple Heart transitioned to honoring members of the United States armed forces who have been wounded or killed in battle.

Since this honor has been reinstated in the United States, approximately 1.7 million service men and women, including many Alaskans, have received the Purple Heart. Currently, there are about 500,000 Purple Heart recipients who are living.

In the past, the State of Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage has recognized August 7 as Purple Heart Day. It is, however, our nation's oldest military medal, and we wish to honor recipients on an annual basis on the day of the award's inception. We ask you for your support to establish August 7 as Purple Heart Day in perpetuity to honor those who have been wounded or killed in battle.

## Ellie Sica

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**From:** ronakph@gci.net on behalf of Ron Siebels [ronakph@gci.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 21, 2010 4:36 PM  
**To:** Rep. Berta Gardner; Rep. Nancy Dahlstrom; Sen. Johnny Ellis; Rep. Anna Fairclough; Rep. Carl Gatto; Rep. Cathy Munoz; Rep. Charisse Millett; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Jay Ramras; Rep. Mike Chenault; Rep. Mike Doogan; Rep. Mike Hawker; Rep. Pete Petersen; Rep. Alan Austerman; Rep. Bill Thomas; Rep. Bob Buch; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. John Coghill; Rep. Kurt Olson; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Wes Keller; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Con Bunde; Sen. Gary Stevens; Josh Tempel  
**Cc:** Noah Hanson; Ellie Sica; John Bircher; JimS; CJones; Bill Hutton; BMcKenty; Jack Leonard; Frank Van-Hoy  
**Subject:** Purple Heart Trail bill,---HB274

Dear members of the Alaska legislature,

I asked my local Representative (Berta Gardner) to help me get a bill passed that would establish August 7<sup>th</sup> as Purple Heart day in perpetuity. Representative Gardner jumped right on this with her consistent support and we also have gained the immediate and dedicated support of Representative Nancy Dahlstrom.

Earlier today in reviewing the on-line status of HB274 I note that many of you have already signed on as sponsors/co-sponsors. "THANK YOU", and on behalf of our statewide MOPH members I sincerely express our appreciation for your devoted commitment towards all of Alaska's combat wounded veterans. I can assure you that our Alaska legislators from both houses in Juneau have placed Alaska firmly and admirably on the National Map in terms of taking care of its veterans. Alaska is well noticed and I proudly take your commitment with me on trips to other locations. I am proud to tell other veterans and a variety of Washington officials how well our elected officials support veteran causes in this state. I can also assure you that Alaska is frequently envied by the veterans of many other states. Your support has helped all of Alaska, veteran and non-veteran, in obtaining a favorable image all across this great nation.

Again, the bill I refer you to is HB274, the "Purple Heart Day" bill. This is intended to be an honorary action issue in perpetuity. Governor Palin signed a similar declaration last year prior to leaving office. I maintain that it could probably be done every year but that would only create more work and tie your hands from your other heavy workload of important tasks. A onetime permanent fix through the state legislature is the way to go in my opinion. It should not create hardly any cost for the state and it is not intended to be a paid holiday. Much history of August 7<sup>th</sup> as Purple Heart Day is widely available on internet sources.

To the point; I think there is sufficient support in Juneau to get this bill approved during this Legislative session and we thank each of you for your continued support to help get it accomplished. So, pending approval of HB274 our next desire is to have the bill signed during a public event that could take place during our annual MOPH Department convention that will occur on Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup> in Anchorage. I have already contacted the Governor's office about a possible bill signing pending the legislative approval of HB274. Our MOPH National Commander and his wife have made plans to join us at our Convention on June 12<sup>th</sup>. If our Alaskan elected officials can get HB274 passed and a bill signing ceremony is set-up then I feel confident that I can get the event included in the Purple Heart magazine which is distributed across all reaches of America including off shore areas. I envision an event of about an hour duration that could occur around mid-day in conjunction with our MOPH convention.

I think there is plenty of time to work out any possible bill signing details with media involvement. I just wanted to give everyone a timely heads up on the possibility of having a public bill signing event on June 12<sup>th</sup>, (pending bill approval). The bill sponsors and the Governor will of course be invited to this anticipated free public event along with our members who are Purple Heart recipients.

I would also ask that you help spread the good word on this bill and enlist the support of other Alaska legislative members. Unanimous legislative consent would send yet another strong message to everyone that Alaska consistently and historically stands firmly behind "ALL" of its veterans.

I thank each of you for your time and consideration, and wish the best that life can offer to each of you and your loved ones.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

I remain "Yours In Patriotism"

*Ron Siebels*

Ron Siebels  
MOPH, National Americanism Officer  
MOPH, National Purple Heart Trail coordinator  
MOPH, Department Commander, Alaska

## Noah Hanson

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**From:** ronakph@gci.net on behalf of Ron Siebels [ronakph@gci.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 19, 2010 11:06 AM  
**To:** Noah Hanson  
**Cc:** Rep. Berta Gardner; Rep. Nancy Dahistrom  
**Subject:** Support for Purple Heart Day legislation.  
**Attachments:** PURPLE HEART DAY.pdf

*Noah, I hope the following is the support information you need. Please contact me for anything else I can help you with. Please remember that I will be in DC during the first part of February. I should be available here in Alaska the rest of January.*

Dear Honorable Legislators serving Alaska,

The purpose of this message is to enlist your support to declare August 7<sup>th</sup> of each year as Purple Heart Day in Alaska on a forever/perpetual basis. Governor Palin declared August 7<sup>th</sup> as Purple Heart day last year and I am sure that Governor Parnell would do so again this year. But I believe that doing it once on a permanent basis and in the right manner through the legislative process will save everyone time and paperwork in the future.

It was on August 7<sup>th</sup> 1782 that General George Washington first created the Badge of Military Merit to honor the bravery of his soldiers. In 1932 General Douglas McArthur put new life into this award and it was recreated as the Purple Heart.

The following is from archives: quote>>

**On February 22, 1932 (the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth), the War Department issued the following General Order: "By order of the President of the United States, the Purple Heart established by General George Washington at Newburgh, August 7, 1782, during the War of the Revolution, hereby revived out of respect to his memory and military achievements. " unquote<<**

I would also like to direct your attention to the attached information because it offers even more details.

There is a precedence for this action in other states. Wisconsin has excellent legislation that has established August 7<sup>th</sup> as Purple Heart Day in perpetuity. This date is also recognized as Purple Heart Day at the National level. Here is the legislative action from Wisconsin;

### **Wisconsin's Purple Heart Day**

Purple Heart Day in Wisconsin is designated in state law. Wisconsin State Statutes s. 14.16 (11) states:

*"The governor shall annually proclaim **August 7 as Purple Heart Day** and urge the people and organizations of the state to display the American flag on that day as a public expression of the recognition of those individuals who have been wounded or killed in action preserving the freedoms that all United States citizens cherish."*

Other states are increasingly taking similar action. I see Alaska as sort of a trend setter on legislation that honors and supports veterans. It is my intent to get this Alaska Legislative Accomplishment included in the Purple Heart magazine when the bill passes in Juneau.

I see little if any cost in this legislation. I do not ask for this to be another paid holiday for anyone, I only ask for the honorary declaration. I therefore kindly ask for the full support of both the House and the Senate to establish August 7<sup>th</sup> as Purple Heart Day in Alaska on a permanent basis. Thank you!

*Ron Siebels*

Ron Siebels

MOPH, National Americanism Officer

MOPH, National Purple Heart Trail coordinator

MOPH, Department Commander, Alaska

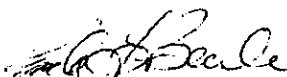
All Members of the 26<sup>th</sup> Legislature,

19 Jan 2010

This letter is to proclaim on behalf of the Commander Tom Schanrock and all members of Department of Alaska Disabled American Veterans of Alaska support HB274, making Aug 7, Purple Heart Day annually in Alaska.

We also suggest verbiage be added to the legislation to have the Governor issue a proclamation annually for our fellow veterans and Purple Heart recipients recognition

Respectfully,



Pamela F. Beale, Adjutant,  
State Disabled American Veterans  
Commander, DAV Metro Chapter 7

# STATE OF ALASKA



## *Executive Proclamation* *by* *Sarah Palin, Governor*

WHEREAS, on August 7, 1782, General George Washington created the Badge of Military Merit, later to become the Purple Heart, which was awarded to singularly meritorious and loyal soldiers. The badge was honorably worn on the left breast of a uniform coat; and

WHEREAS, today, the Purple Heart is awarded to a member of the Armed Forces by the President of the United States to recognize those who have been wounded or killed during a time of conflict; and

WHEREAS, serving as a symbol of love, loyalty, and sacrifice for our country, the Purple Heart is one of the most recognized and respected of all military medals; and

WHEREAS, Alaska has a rich military history, and citizens across the state are dedicated to recognizing the presence of our military men and women serving in our communities; and

WHEREAS, we extend our appreciation and recognition of the important contributions of the Armed Services to the state of Alaska and communities throughout our state;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Sarah Palin, Governor of the state of Alaska, do hereby proclaim August 7, 2009 as:

### *Purple Heart Day*

in Alaska, and encourage all citizens to recognize the importance of our United States servicemen and women Purple Heart recipients, especially those living in our communities, and observe this day in honor of their selflessness and devotion to our state and nation.

Dated: July 23, 2009

## PURPLE HEART DAY-Political News

### Political News

August 7th is Purple Heart Day - a Day to Honor America's Combat Wounded and Fallen Heroes  
Washington DC 8:07:2009 12:54 AM GMT (TransWorldNews)

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Washington, DC - Each year on August 7th, Americans should pause to remember and honor the brave men and women who were either wounded on the battlefield or paid the ultimate sacrifice with their lives. The Purple Heart is awarded to any member of the U.S. Armed Forces that has been wounded or died as a result of a wound in battle. This now includes those persons who died in captivity while a prisoner of war (POW). We now celebrate Purple Heart Day on the anniversary of its inception, August 7th. On this day it is our patriotic duty to remember and recognize those people willing to serve our country, no matter the price.

The Medal now known as the Purple Heart actually began as the "Badge of Military Merit." On August 7th, 1782 in Newburgh, New York, General George Washington ordered the creation of a badge of distinction for enlisted men and noncommissioned officers. The badge took the form of a heart in purple cloth or silk, edged with narrow lace or binding, and was pinned to a uniform coat above the left breast. The Badge of Military Merit was only awarded to three Revolutionary War soldiers and fell into disuse following the War of Independence. Although never abolished, the award was not proposed again officially until after World War I.

On October 10, 1927, then Army Chief of Staff General Charles Pelot Summerall directed that a draft bill be sent to Congress "to revive the Badge of Military Merit," but the bill was later withdrawn. On January 7, 1931, Summerall's successor, General Douglas MacArthur, confidentially reopened work on a new design, involving the Washington Commission of Fine Arts. Elizabeth Will, an Army heraldic specialist in the Office of the Quartermaster General, was named to redesign the newly revived medal, which became known as the Purple Heart. Using general specifications provided to her, Will created the design sketch for the present medal of the Purple Heart. This new design was issued on the bicentennial of George Washington's birth and MacArthur was the first recipient of the Purple Heart.

During the early period of American involvement in World War II, the Purple Heart was awarded both for wounds received in action against the enemy and for meritorious performance of duty. With the establishment of the Legion of Merit, by an Act of Congress, the practice of awarding the Purple Heart for meritorious service was discontinued. By Executive Order 9277, dated December 3, 1942, the decoration was extended to be applicable to all services and required that regulations of the Services be uniform in application as far as practicable. This executive order also authorized the award only for wounds received.

The organization now known as the "Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) of the U.S.A. Inc.," was formed in 1932 for the protection and mutual interest of all who have received the decoration. Chartered by the Congress, The MOPH is unique among Veteran Service Organizations in that all its members were wounded in combat. For this sacrifice, they were awarded the Purple Heart Medal. With grants from the MOPH Service Foundation, the MOPH and its Ladies Auxiliary promote Patriotism, Fraternalism, and the Preservation of America's military history. Most importantly, they provide comfort and assistance to all Veterans and their families, especially those requiring claims assistance with the VA, those who are homeless, and those requiring employment assistance. MOPH volunteers through the VAVS program, provide assistance to hospitalized veterans at VA sites and State Veterans Homes.

For further information contact:

National Public Relations Director, John Bircher, 352-753-5535

Email: [PublicRelations@Purpleheart.org](mailto:PublicRelations@Purpleheart.org)

Web: [www.purpleheart.org](http://www.purpleheart.org)

MOPH, Alaska; Our top 5 Legislative priorities for the 2010 legislative session.

1. Purple Heart Day established in perpetuity on August 7<sup>th</sup>. It was on August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1782 that General George Washington created the Badge of Military Merit. This award later became the Purple Heart Medal through action taken by General MacArthur. Currently other states have passed legislation that establishes August 7<sup>th</sup> as Purple Heart day in perpetuity. We do not ask for any special favors beyond the Purple Heart Day permanent recognition and we do not think it should be viewed as another paid holiday. We simply seek a day of honorary recognition as other states have already done. **"UPDATE"**, action has been initiated on this bill in the 2010 legislature and the bill has been pre-filed. Several co-sponsors have already signed on in support of this. We kindly ask for unanimous support from the legislature members in this endeavor.

2. Adequate Funding for a Fairbanks Veterans Cemetery. The northern regions of our State are witnessing an ever increasing number of Alaska residents many of whom are military veterans. Currently many of these deceased northern region veterans are transferred and buried at the FT Richardson National cemetery near Anchorage. This lengthy distance creates an almost impossibility for the elderly spouse living in the Fairbanks area to even visit their loved ones grave site. We ask the legislature to appropriate sufficient funds to get a Veterans Cemetery established in the Fairbanks region.

3. Give full honor to Master Sergeant James Bondsteel by renaming the Sergeant Jim Bondsteel bridge across the Matanuska River. During the 22<sup>nd</sup> Alaska State Legislative session SB269 was passed naming bridge 1121 the "James Bondsteel Bridge of Honor". The original intent of this legislation was highly honorable but in reality it created a vague impression on those who travel over the bridge. It does not indicate that Sergeant James Bondsteel was in the military. It gives an incorrect rank, while he was a Staff Sergeant when the MOH was awarded his actual rank at discharge was MSG (Master Sergeant). MSG is three ranks higher than Sergeant. The term *BRIDGE OF HONOR* is misunderstood even to the frequent Alaska traveler. It should openly indicate *"MEDAL OF HONOR"* We contend that the legislation was well intended but in reality it disrespects the prestige of the Medal of Honor, his true service rank, and the fact that he was a military member of the US Army. We suggest that SB269 (22<sup>nd</sup> session) be amended as follows>>

"1<sup>st</sup> line "MEDAL OF HONOR BRIDGE", 2<sup>nd</sup> line "IN HONOR OF", 3<sup>rd</sup> line "MASTER SERGEANT (MSG) JAMES BONDSTEEL", bottom line "US ARMY-VIETNAM-1968". We would also request that Alaska DOT create and install appropriate signs that would be placed at both ends of the bridge.

4. Increase the funding level for the work that Veterans Organization Service Officers do for all Alaska Veterans. This state funding should be distributed fairly but only go to those Service Officers who are fully accredited at the VA level to care for the needs of Alaska veterans.

5. Provide additional state assistance that would provide for the placement of accredited Veteran Service Officers in major communities where no such Service Officer currently exists. This would cover such major cities as Juneau, Valdez, Bethel, Ketchikan, Sitka, Nome, Barrow, Dillingham, Kodiak, etc. We fully realize that placing Service Officers in every Alaska community is totally unrealistic. We maintain that VA accredited Service Officers located in strategic Alaska vicinities can absorb the needs of veterans living in and near those locations.

We would also like to take this opportunity to again thank our elected officials for your past and continuing support in caring for the needs of all veterans. Your efforts are proof that Alaska truly cares about its military veterans.

*Ron Siebels*

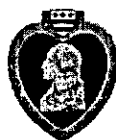
Ron Siebels

MOPH, National Americanism Officer

MOPH, National Purple Heart Trail coordinator

MOPH, Department Commander, Alaska

THE NATIONAL  
PURPLE HEART  
HALL OF  
HONOR

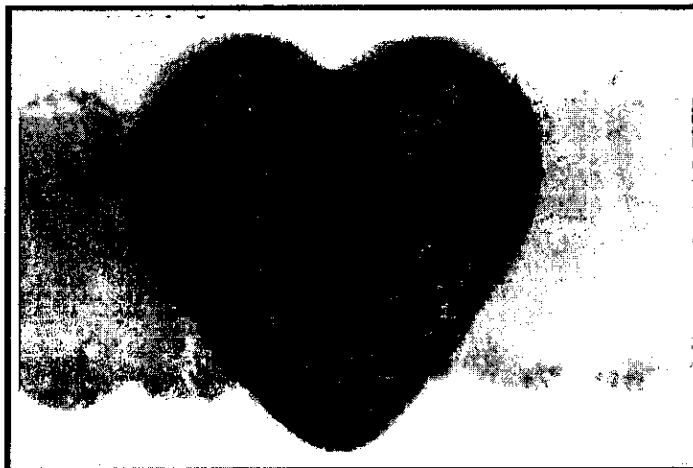


# NATIONAL PURPLE HEART HALL OF HO

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## History

The award known as the Purple Heart has a history that reaches back to the waning days of the American Revolution. The Continental Congress had forbidden General George Washington from granting commissions and promotions in rank to recognize merit. Yet Washington wanted to honor merit, particularly among the enlisted soldiers. On August 7, 1782, his general orders established the Badge of Military Merit:



The Badge of Military Merit circa 1782

"... The General ever desirous to cherish virtuous ambition in his soldiers, as well as to foster and encourage every species of Military merit directs whenever any singularly meritorious action is performed, the author of it shall be permitted to wear on his facings, over his left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth or silk edged with narrow lace or binding."

This award was open only to enlisted men and granted them the distinction of being permitted to pass all guards and sentinels as could commissioned-officers. The names of the recipients were to have been kept in a "Book of Merit" (which has never been recovered). At the present time there are three known recipients of the Badge of Military Merit: Sergeant Elijah Churchill, 2nd Continental Dragoons; Sergeant William Brown, 5th and Sergeant Daniel Bissel, 2nd Connecticut Continental Line Infantry.

Washington stated that the award was to be a permanent one, but once the Revolution ended, the Badge of Merit was all but forgotten until the 20th century.

General John J. "Blackjack" Pershing suggested a need for an award for merit in 1918, but it was not until 1932 that the Purple Heart was created in recognition of Washington's ideals and for the bicentennial of his birth. General Order No.3 announced the establishment of the award:

"...By order of the President of the United States, the Purple Heart, established by General George Washington at Newburgh, August 7, 1782, during the War of the Revolution is hereby revived out of respect to his memory and military achievements.

By order of the Secretary of War:  
Douglas MacArthur  
General, Chief of Staff

On May 28, 1932, 138 World War I veterans were conferred their Purple Hearts at Temple Hill, in New Windsor, NY. Temple Hill was the site of the New Windsor

Cantonment, which was the final encampment of the Continental Army in the winter of 1782-1783. Today, the National Purple Heart continues the tradition begun here in 1932, of honoring veterans who have earned the Purple Heart.

The Purple Heart has undergone many changes with respect to the criteria for being awarded. At first, the Purple Heart was exclusively awarded to Army and Army Air Corps personnel and could not be awarded posthumously to the next of kin. In 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed an executive order allowing the Navy to award the Purple Heart to Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guard personnel. Also in that year, the Purple Heart was made available for posthumous award to any member of the military killed on or after December 7, 1941.

Originally the Purple Heart was awarded for meritorious service. Being wounded was one portion of consideration for merit. With the creation of the Legion of Merit in 1942, the award of the Purple Heart for meritorious service became unnecessary and was therefore discontinued. The Purple Heart, 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 under competent authority in any capacity with one of the U.S. Armed Services after April 5, 1917 has been wounded, killed, or has died after being wounded.

## Clinton Bill Would Establish Day To Honor Purple Heart Medal Recipients



Every member of the United States armed services who ever won a Purple Heart, the oldest military decoration in this country, would be acknowledged in a National Purple Heart Recognition Day proposed by U.S. Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Chuck Hagel (R-Nebraska).

Clinton, in announcing the Senate had passed the resolution recently, declared:

"Right now, American troops bravely serving their nation in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere are close to our hearts and this legislation would be a fitting tribute to them. The sacrifices they are making on our behalf follow in the long line of courageous service by previous generations of Americans who risked or gave their lives for the freedom we all enjoy today.

"A presidential proclamation asking Americans to honor the bravery and sacrifice of the more than 1.5 million veterans who have been awarded this prestigious medal will help pay proper tribute to those extraordinary men and women, and also remind us of the valor and service of all our veterans."

The senators' legislation encourages all Americans to learn about the history of the Order of the Purple Heart for Military Merit, which was established 222 years ago on Aug. 7, 1782 by General George Washington during the Revolutionary War. It was then called the Honorary Badge of Distinction, or the Badge of Military Merit or the Decoration of the Purple Heart, Clinton said.

The bill, beside encouraging all Americans to learn about the decoration, also requests that the president issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to conduct appropriate ceremonies, activities and programs to demonstrate support for people who have been awarded the Purple Heart.

Clinton explained that the Purple Heart is awarded by the president of the United States to members of the armed forces who are wounded in conflict with an enemy force, or while held by an enemy force as a prisoner of war, and posthumously to the next of kin of members of the Armed Forces who are killed in conflict with an enemy force, or who die of a wound received in conflict with an enemy force.

She said there are more than 1,535,000 recipients of the Purple Heart Medal, approximately 550,000 of whom are still living.

Previously, the Senate passed legislation sponsored by Clinton and Hagel designating August 7, 2003 as National Purple Heart Recognition Day. Clinton has also proposed that the U.S. Postal Service issue a commemorative stamp to pay tribute to Purple Heart recipients.

## **MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART**

The Military Order of the Purple Heart is a non-profit congressionally chartered organization made up of Recipients of the Purple Heart. The nationwide MOPH members consist of both former and active duty military members from all branches of the service.

Alaska currently has over 200 members who have signed up as MOPH members but Alaska has many more Purple Heart recipients who are not MOPH members. Alaska currently has 4 active MOPH Chapters. We have members who are located from Fairbanks to Juneau and even beyond. Alaska even has members who reside in other states but retained their membership here. We encourage all Purple Heart recipients to join the MOPH.

The MOPH in Alaska currently has 2 nationally accredited service officers who can and do provide assistance to ALL veterans who seek help in processing claims with the VA. We also provide assistance to the families of Purple Heart recipients.

The MOPH in Alaska is not a large organization but it is the only organization consisting entirely of those who have been wounded or injured in actual combat in defense of our nation.

-- Ron Siebels, Department Commander, Alaska