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# TONY KURTZ

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 50<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## 2021 Assembly Bill 339

Relating to: designating STH 21 as a Purple Heart Memorial Highway.

Thursday, June 17, 2021

Assembly Committee on Transportation

Thank you Chairman Plumer for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 339 (AB 339) today and thank you to the members of the committee for taking my testimony.

Wisconsin has a strong military heritage with deep roots stretching from the civil war, through the World Wars, and into present day conflicts. Wisconsin citizens have shown time and time again that they are ready and willing to fight for our freedom and defend our country. For this, we should always be ready and willing to honor our veterans in any way we can.

Currently our state has designated Highway 14, stretching from Richland Center to Lacrosse as a Purple Heart Highway. We have also designated Richland Center as a Purple Heart city. This bill would build upon this legacy for our Purple Heart Recipients.

Designating State Highway 21 as a Purple Heart Memorial Highway would allow us to honor our veterans in a unique way. This highway is 123 miles long, traversing through Monroe, Juneau, Adams, Waushara, and Winnebago Counties and is used as a major artery east and west across our great state. This bill would allow us to proudly honor our state's Purple Heart recipients.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present my testimony on AB 339 relating to designating STH 21 as a Purple Heart Memorial Highway.



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# HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

## June 17, 2021 Assembly Committee on Transportation Testimony on Assembly Bill 339

Thank you Chairman Plumer and committee members for hearing Assembly Bill (AB) 339, which would designate State Highway 21 as a Purple Heart Memorial Highway. I appreciate the support of Reps. Callahan, Skowronski and Thiesfeldt, who are cosponsors of the bill.

Rep. Kurtz and I drafted this bill after veterans with the Necedah Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post approached us regarding this memorial designation. AB 339 will designate the 123.4 miles of State Highway 21 from Sparta to OshKosh as a Purple Heart Memorial Highway.

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 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 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 200<sup>th</sup> 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.

I am thankful for the men and women who have served, their sacrifices and bravery. Please join me in supporting AB 339 to show our appreciation and say – THANK YOU!

Thank you again to the committee for hearing this proposal, and your timely action on the bill.



## PURPLE HEART RIDERS of WI, Inc.



**June 17, 2021**

Chairman Plumer, Vice-Chair Spiros, and Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Transportation;

My name is Jason Johns, and I am the founder of the Purple Heart Riders of WI, a 501 (c)(4) nonprofit organization, as well as the National Vice-President of the National Purple Heart Riders Association (PHRA). With me I have my brother-in-arms, Scott Kruchten, the President of the Purple Heart Riders of WI. We are an association of motorcycle riders who have been wounded in action while engaged in combat with the enemy to protect the liberties and freedoms we hold so dear. Our mission is to provide an avenue for our members to experience the healing that only wind therapy can provide and we thank you for this opportunity to express our support for AB 339.

Designating the entire route of State Highway 21 as a "Purple Heart Memorial Highway" and erecting a permanent memorial along the route to signify this designation, is a powerful testament to the sacrifice made by those men and women of the U.S. military who have been killed or wounded in action with the enemy or have spent time in captivity as a Prisoner of War. All those who drive this well-traveled section of state highway, whether on two, three, or four wheels, will be reminded of the fact that freedom does not come without a cost.

The Purple Heart Riders of Wisconsin wishes to thank our fellow Iraq War veteran, Representative Tony Kurtz, and Senator Howard Marklein, for authoring this legislation to honor our nation's oldest military award and those who have received it. We also express our gratitude to its bi-partisan cosponsors.

On behalf of the members of the Purple Heart Riders of WI, Inc., and the National Purple Heart Riders Association, we respectfully ask for your support of AB 339.