

Veterans



Commemorations and Memorials

The Legislative Assembly passed several concurrent resolutions to commemorate and honor the lives of Oregon veterans and their service to the state. [Senate Concurrent Resolution 6](#) memorializes the life of Representative Ralph Davis Brown (1944-2022), a member of the National Guard who served as mayor and city council member for the City of Cornelius and then served as state Representative for House District 29.

[Senate Concurrent Resolution 7](#) celebrates the life of Curtis “Curt” Benefiel (1926-2015), who served in the United States Navy and was a lifelong educator. [Senate Concurrent Resolution 8](#) memorializes the life of Donald C. “Don” Carey (1925-2019), who served with honor and distinction during World War II in the United States Air Force. He became a celebrated high school golf coach at Stayton High School and the most successful basketball coach in Oregon history.

[Senate Concurrent Resolution 11](#) memorializes the service and sacrifice of Lance Corporal Don Edward Darnall (1946-1966), who was drafted into the United States Marine Corps to serve in the Vietnam War and was killed in action at 20 years of age, in the Quang Tri Province.

[House Concurrent Resolution 27](#) recognizes Robert A. Hales (1967-2008), who served in the United States Army and became a volunteer firefighter for the Scappoose Rural Fire Protection District. After 12 hours of fighting multiple wildfires, he lost his life in the line of duty.

Contents

Commemorations and Memorials	1
Employment and Benefits	2
Military	3

See the 2023 **Legislative Summary Report** for [Veterans](#) which highlights policy measures that received a public hearing during Oregon’s 2023 Regular Legislative Session.

[House Concurrent Resolution 28](#) recognizes and honors Lieutenant Colonel Herman A. “Mac” MacDonald, Jr. (1929-2022). Lieutenant Colonel MacDonald Jr. was commanding officer of the 1st Force Reconnaissance Company of the United States Marine Corps, was deployed to Vietnam in a United States Special Forces Unit, and served as a military aide to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development George Romney. He was highly decorated for his military service, and following his retirement, he became a teacher and high school principal at the Salem School District. He was an advocate for Veterans in Oregon and was the curator of the Oregon Military Educational Display.

Other measures deliberated this session that recognized military service to the state include [Senate Concurrent Resolution 2](#), which honors Oregon National Guard service members. In recent years, over 1,900 Guard members were deployed to assist with Oregonians’ safety and

well-being, including the 2020 winter flooding in Eastern Oregon; the COVID-19 pandemic; the catastrophic 2020 Labor Day wildfires; and the 2021 winter ice storms in western Oregon. The resolution also recognizes that in 2020 and 2021 the Oregon National Guard deployed more than 2,000 airmen and soldiers outside of Oregon on missions supporting national interest and security.

Fallen Hero roadside memorial signs recognize Oregonians who were killed in the line of duty, became prisoners of war, or who were missing in action while serving the Armed Forces. Previous legislation required that the remains of these Oregonians need to be returned to Oregon to receive Fallen Hero status and [House Bill 2144](#) removes that requirement.

Gold Star Families are those who have lost a family member through active-duty service in the United States Armed Forces. [House Bill 2146](#) designates the Oregon section of U.S. Highway 30 from U.S. Highway 101 to the Idaho border as the Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway.

[House Bill 3001](#) directs the Department of Transportation to waive fees for Fallen Hero roadside memorial highway signs and Gold Star Family vehicle registration plates. [House Bill 3000](#) (*not enacted*) would have appropriated \$20,000 in General Funds to cover costs associated with Fallen Hero roadside memorial signs and Gold Star Family vehicle registration plates.

Any member of the U.S. Armed Forces who dies while on active duty, or veterans who are discharged under conditions other than dishonorable, may be eligible for burial in a national cemetery. However, burial benefits do not always include covering the cost of the burial. There have been instances in Oregon of the cremated remains of veterans being discovered and unclaimed, and as a result, are uninterred. [House Bill 2147](#) designates the governing body of each county designate a person to ensure the interment of unclaimed

cremated remains of veterans and their survivors.

[House Bill 3421](#) requires any Veterans Day and Memorial Day commemorative events and ceremonies held by the state government be held on the respective, legal holiday. The measure also declares Legislative Assembly expectation that all state-owned and state-maintained facilities, memorials, and war memorials be clean and well-maintained for Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

Employment and Benefits

While there are several federal and state programs to assist veterans in furthering their education, either within the university system, through professional training, or as part of apprenticeship programs, there are still situations where a veteran may not currently qualify for assistance, leaving them unable to continue their educational training. The Legislative Assembly created the Veteran Education Bridge Grant Program in 2019 to provide grants to allow veterans to continue their study; however, this program was scheduled to sunset in January of 2022. [House Bill 2271](#) makes the Veteran Education Bridge Grant Program permanent, and extended applicability to career schools, apprenticeship programs registered with the State Apprenticeship and Training Council, and on-the-job training programs offered by public employers.

Oregon provides businesses owned by a service-disabled veteran with contract preferences with state, county, and city governments, as well as special jurisdiction contracts with hospitals and universities. Qualifications include U.S. citizenship, majority ownership and day-to-day control of the business by the veteran, and size of business. [House Bill 2295](#) extends eligibility for public contract preferences to businesses owned by any veteran, regardless of disability status.



Current law entitles public employees who serve in the National Guard, Guard Reserve, or a reserve component of the Armed Forces or Public Health Service, with a 15-day leave of absence without loss of time, pay, or regular leave for initial or annual active-duty training. Most Guard members are required to participate in two weeks of training each year, in addition to monthly two-day trainings, which usually takes place on weekends. [House Bill 2865](#) entitles public employees who serve in National Guard roles with military leave of absence of up to 21 days per year.

The Legislative Assembly considered several measures related to taxes and military pensions. [Senate Bill 181](#) (*not enacted*) would have exempted, from state income tax, military pay received by Oregon National Guard members while on active service to the state or on state active duty. [Senate Bill 884](#) (*not enacted*) would have increased property tax exemptions for Oregon veterans with disabilities and granted exemptions to surviving spouses of disabled veterans.

Military

The Oregon Military Department supports the Oregon Youth Challenge Program (OYCP) as a voluntary, military-style alternative school for youth ages 16-19, who are at risk of dropping out of school. OYCP participants can earn a diploma, school credit, or prepare for the

General Education Development (GED) test. The program lasts for 22 weeks, after which participants receive up to 12 months of mentored support. [Senate Bill 1034](#) directs the Department of Education to transfer, from the State School Fund, moneys sufficient to pay the costs outstanding after receipt of federal funds or General Fund appropriations, to the Oregon Military Department for operation of the Oregon Youth Challenge Program.

The Office of State Judge Advocate, commonly known as JAG, provides legal services and counsel to commanders and members of the Oregon National Guard. Current law allows the Adjutant General to appoint commissioned officers as temporary Assistant State Judge Advocates. [Senate Bill 994](#) permits the Adjutant General to appoint non-commissioned members of the Oregon National Guard as temporary Assistant State Judge Advocates, allowing Guard members to gain valuable work and legal experience while in law school or studying for the Oregon State Bar examination.

[Senate Bill 1033](#) modifies the definition of “active service” and creates a definition for “active service of the state” and “state active duty” to better reflect duties performed by Oregon National Guard members while under deployment.

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