

**THE  
MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART  
OF THE U.S.A., INC.**



**THE ONLY CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED VETERANS ORGANIZATION  
EXCLUSIVELY FOR COMBAT-WOUNDED VETERANS**

**ANNUAL TESTIMONY  
ERNIE RIVERA, NATIONAL COMMANDER**

**BEFORE A JOINT HEARING OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE COMMITTEES  
ON VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**MARCH 4, 2021**

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**Chairman Tester, Chairman Takano, Ranking members  
Senator Moran, and Representative Bost, members of the  
committees, and ladies and gentlemen.**

**As the National Commander of the Military Order of the  
Purple Heart (MOPH), it is an honor and privilege to appear  
before you today, representing members of the Order. I am  
sure that all of you are aware that the MOPH is unique among  
Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) in that our membership  
is comprised entirely of veterans who were wounded in  
combat on the battlefield in the numerous wars in which this  
nation has been engaged. For the wounds they suffered they  
were awarded the Purple Heart Medal.**

**I am here today representing our 44,000 members that does the work of the order in 417 Chapters, 48 state Departments and 6 Regions across America in our communities and VA medical centers, veterans' homes and community based out-patient clinics through the VAVS program.**

**Based on our casualty research we estimate approximately 350,000 living Purple Heart recipients from all conflicts that require our legislative advocacy and services that only the Military Order of the Purple Heart can provide.**

**I believe I also sit before you here today on behalf of the almost 2 million servicemen and women, Purple Heart recipients all, who either gave their lives or spilled their blood for our nation and its citizens while defending the freedoms that all Americans are blessed to enjoy.**

**My oral testimony will be as brief as possible with the understanding that the full written testimony will be entered into the record.**

**Since it's organizing in 1932, the MOPH has been, and continues to be, the original Veterans' Organization for wounded warriors. We continue to serve veterans of all wars,**

**at no cost, by providing tangible benefits to those veterans and their families who require our assistance.**

**I would also like to state that MOPH supports the recommendations made by the VSOs who devote their time and effort to publish the Independent Budget. MOPH is a proud member of both The Military Coalition (TMC) and the National Military Veterans Alliance (NMVA).**

**MOPH 2021 PRIORITIES:**

**First and foremost, I need to bring to your attention concerning an issue on the rights and usage of the Military Order of the Purple Heart Logo, the words and marks Purple Heart, and the Purple Heart medal. In 2019, a court ruling gave the rights, copyrights, and trademarks of our Logo to another organization. In addition, the court order severed the organization as a subordinate Unit of the Order.**

**The court ruling also requires the Order to request in writing, permission from the Organization to use our own Logo and the words Purple Heart for fundraising events and purposes. This has severely hampered our ability to provide the necessary services to Veterans that is specified in our mission statement.**

**Since 1932, the Department of Defense has allowed the MOPH to use the Purple Heart Medal in its logo. The Military Order of the Purple Heart is requesting support for the Purple Heart Protection Act. This proposed legislation, if passed will allow the MOPH to use the Medal, its likeness, and the word mark Purple Heart. I am requesting assistance from your committees to allow members of the MOPH to use the Purple Heart medal, its likeness, the word mark Purple Heart to support our organization, and to return to us the rights of the Medal we have all earned.**

**Second, we are leading a coordinated effort with the National Flag Foundation which propose a database like those we have for the Medal of Honor (MOH), Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) and Silver Star (SS) that is verified by the DOD. Sadly, we have found several phonies claiming to be Purple Heart recipients, and some managed to join our organization with forged documents we simply cannot verify. Stolen Valor hurts every Veteran legitimately awarded the Purple Heart medal thru theft in services and makes business suspicious of being scammed, when a Veteran mentions he was awarded the Purple Heart. By working together on this project, we feel this should be added to the Purple Heart Protection Act. Whatever**

**the course of action we absolute need this to be a priority.**

**Lastly our desire is to see the US Department of Veterans Affairs put more direction, funding, and effort into alternative therapies. We have clearly seen the benefits of alternative therapies and would like to see much more.**

**This concludes my testimony, and I will be pleased to answer any questions.**

**Thank you,**

***ERME RIVERA***

**MOPH National Commander**

**Disclosure of Federal Grants and Contracts:**

**The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) does not currently receive, nor has MOPH ever received any federal money for grants or contracts other than the routine allocation of office space and associated resources at government facilities for outreach and direct veteran assistance services.**