

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



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

STATEMENT OF

**Ralph "Carder" Ferguson
NATIONAL COMMANDER**

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

MARCH 6, 2024

MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

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2024 ANNUAL TESTIMONY

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Chairmen Tester, Ranking Member Jerry Moran, and esteemed Members of the Committee, on behalf of the approximately 48,000 members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), it is my honor and privilege to appear before this body to offer our testimony.

As I am sure all of you are aware, the MOPH is a unique organization in that our membership is made up entirely of Veterans who were wounded in combat. First organized in 1932 and chartered by Congress in 1958, the MOPH stands today as the original Veterans Service Organization for Combat Wounded Veterans. I am proud to report our exceptional progress this year as an organization to you today.

The MOPH is proud to give back to our fellow veterans through our robust national programs. They range from providing scholarships, to job training, to advocacy, and volunteering. Certainly, this selfless service by MOPH Patriots epitomizes the phrase "veterans helping veterans."

One of our national programs is our software development training. We partnered with the Redding Software Corporation to provide combat-wounded veterans with software development training. The Purple Heart recipients are given training and an internship, and at the end of this one-year program, the veterans are offered job placement. Helping these combat-wounded veterans find employment as full-stack web developers affords them the flexibility they need on their long road to recovery.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to both Committees for your continued hard work on behalf of our Nation's veterans during the 118th Congress. The successful passage of multiple pieces of significant legislation including the PACT Act, and Chairman Tester and Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee Chairman Brown have introduced legislation to help veterans using the VA home loan exit forbearance and get

their mortgage payments back on track, was a monumental achievement, and for that, we are grateful. We also recognize that much of the Committee's work in the 118th Congress will focus on oversight, and we look forward to working with you and the VA to ensure the effective implementation of these new laws. Still, there are many issues affecting veterans that Congress must continue to address with new legislation.

The MOPH is working diligently along with other Veteran Service Organizations such as the VFW to reduce Veteran suicide throughout our country. One of our key initiatives each year is to improve mental health services for Veterans. Over the last two years, we have provided peer counseling training, access to resources, and support to veterans struggling with mental health issues, including PTSD and depression. We all share the anguish and tragedy of suicide deaths, just as we do those lost on the fields of battle. Many of us took an oath to our fallen brothers and sisters on the battlefield to continue to save those who made it home with these unseen wounds of war.

Finding a way to live with the loss of a comrade under any circumstances is an issue for all times and is not a generational issue. In the MOPH, all members have the common bond of shedding blood for our nation. Our World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War Veterans have taught Iraq and Afghanistan members how to continue to live their lives after they return from combat. For that, we are eternally grateful for their excellent example. As the National Commander of the MOPH wounded in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, I can personally attest to how critical it is to have the ability to talk with older combat-wounded veterans who have experienced the same trauma and have developed healthy coping skills over the years.

We have a Women Veterans' Issues group that is working with other VSOs and legislators to help our female veterans. We appreciate the support both houses of the legislature have put into this effort. Together, we can better address their issues and make lives better for many. What has been exciting for our organization to see is an increase in representation within our leadership by female Purple Heart recipients. Several states and regions currently have female veterans leading the way and now our current National Junior Vice is a female Purple Heart veteran.

We continue to serve Veterans and their families through our Scholarship Program. The MOPH grants scholarships to Purple Heart recipients, their spouses, children, and grandchildren each year. This includes surviving family members of Purple Heart recipients who were killed in action. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that an advanced education is made available to them.

This is just a brief overview of the MOPH national programs. It does not even begin to describe the many contributions of what we believe to be the backbone of our organization, our MOPH members.

We are organized into 326 Chapters, 42 Departments, and 6 Regions across the nation, they are constantly engaged with their local communities, acting as ambassadors to the general public

by participating in civic events and running unique programs. Equally important, they support and encourage one another. MOPH members refer to each other as "Patriots," which is most appropriate, as each of them has shed their blood in defense of our great nation on battlefields around the world.

The Order is making a difference in the lives of young Americans through our example and advocacy for the Constitution while actively supporting the American way of life. Our membership strongly believes in supporting our young leaders and recognizing their demonstrated excellence through our leadership awards that are presented to cadets of the ROTC programs as well as youth programs like the Young Marines, Civil Air Patrol, and the Scouts. There is little doubt that the youth of our great nation benefit from learning the skills of leadership required to serve our country.

The PACT Act and other significant efforts that have been passed to help the veterans in our great nation over the past several years continue to bring all Veteran Service Organizations together. **(Teamwork)** Not one organization can do it all alone. We are thankful for the opportunities to continue to partner with other organizations increasing the collective strength and effect all VSOs are having on the Veteran population.

While MOPH always has been and will continue to be, the first to stand up for our fellow Purple Heart recipients, our priorities reflect the fact that we are staunch advocates for all veterans and their families. With that, on behalf of the Order, I am pleased to present the MOPH legislative agenda for 2024.

I am here before you today with a full heart to express our appreciation to Congress for its invaluable assistance with the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2023, Section 584, and "Enhanced Information Related to Awarding of the Purple Heart".

As you are all aware, the Purple Heart is a highly coveted medal that is awarded to our brave service members who have been wounded or killed in combat, spilling their blood in defense of our great nation. For over two centuries, this distinguished award has been a symbol of courage, sacrifice, and devotion to duty.

However, the process of awarding and tracking the Purple Heart has not always been perfect. There have been cases where service members who deserved the medal did not receive it due to bureaucratic complications or administrative errors, or where the medal was awarded but the recipient or their families were not aware.

Thanks to the efforts of Congress, these issues have been addressed in Section 584 of the NDAA. This section requires the Department of Defense to maintain an accurate database of all service members who have been wounded or killed in combat, ensuring that the process of tracking the Purple Heart is transparent and fair.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart recognizes the hard work and dedication that went into drafting and passing this legislation. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the members of Congress who worked tirelessly to ensure that the brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country receive the recognition they deserve. In addition, we would like a more streamlined way on how we can check to see who has received a Purple Heart. Many have proof and some have falsified their documents which causes a rift in the system and where they can get benefits from the VA and local communities. Once this happens then it is extremely hard to get them out of the system and get the back the benefits back to the patriot who deserves it mostly at a local level from the state or community. So many groups depend on us to have a way to help and assist when this action has taken place. We need help in taking care of those who have been awarded the Purple Heart and show they have proper documentation for the Award.

Next let us not forget to thank the families of our fallen heroes, whose sacrifices will forever be honored by this important legislation.

MAJOR RICHARD STAR ACT

As the National Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, I am honored to speak to you today about a piece of legislation that could have a tremendous impact on the lives of wounded veterans.

S. 344, also known as the Major Richard Star Act, is a bill that aims to address a major injustice in our military retirement system. Currently, Veterans who are medically retired due to combat-related injuries receive only a portion of their earned retirement pay.

The Major Richard Star Act seeks to rectify this situation by changing the way that retirement pay is calculated for wounded veterans. If passed, this bill would ensure that Veterans who are medically retired due to combat-related injuries are given the retirement pay they deserve, based on the highest rank they held during their service.

Sadly, Major Star passed away in 2013, but his legacy lives on through this important piece of legislation. The Major Richard Star Act has bipartisan support in Congress and has been endorsed by numerous Veterans organizations, including the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

As an organization that represents the interests of wounded Veterans, we believe that this bill is essential to ensuring that our nation's heroes receive the support and recognition they deserve. We urge Congress to pass this bill and to honor the sacrifices of those who have served our country by providing them with the retirement pay they have earned.

Military Honors Protection Act

18 U.S. Code § 705 - Badge or medal of Veterans' organizations

Whoever knowingly manufactures, reproduces, sells or purchases for resale, either separately or on or appended to, any article of merchandise manufactured or sold, any badge, medal, emblem, or other insignia or any colorable imitation thereof, of any veterans' organization incorporated by enactment of Congress, or of any organization formally recognized by any such veterans' organization as an auxiliary of such veterans' organization, or knowingly prints, lithographs, engraves or otherwise reproduces on any poster, circular, periodical, magazine, newspaper, or other publication, or circulates or distributes any such printed matter bearing a reproduction of such badge, medal, emblem, or other insignia or any colorable imitation thereof, ****this shall include trademark, wordmarks or action that hinders a congressionally chartered veterans' organization in any way from performing fundraising, recruiting and or advocacy or requiring them to seek permission, pay fees or enter into agreements with an individual, organization or entity that is not a congressionally chartered organization****. Except when authorized under rules and regulations prescribed by any such organization.

Resolution to add, *any trademark or wordmark of any part of the name, title, or association that hinders or limits the exercise of fundraising and operations of a congressionally chartered veterans service organization shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than 1 year. Add 6-month imprisonment for any action against a veteran's organization representing protected class awards and decorations protected under

18 U.S. Code § 704 - Military medals or decorations: (c) Enhanced Penalty for Offenses Involving Congressional Medal of Honor.—

(1)In general.—if a decoration or medal involved in an offense under subsection (a) is a [Congressional Medal of Honor](#), in lieu of the punishment provided in that subsection, the offender shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than 1 year, or both.

(2)Congressional Medal of Honor defined.—in this subsection, the term "[Congressional Medal of Honor](#)" means—

(A) a medal of honor awarded under section 7271, 8291, or 9271 of title 10 or section 491 [\[1\]](#) of title 14;

Page 2 Of the Military Order of the Purple Heart resolution pertaining to U.S. Code § 705 - Badge or Medal of Veterans' organizations

(B) a duplicate medal of honor issued under section 7284, 8306, or 9284 of title 10 or section 504 ¹ of title 14; or

(C) a replacement of a medal of honor provided under section 7277, 8303, or 9277 of title 10 or section 501 ¹ of title 14.

(d)Enhanced Penalty for Offenses Involving Certain Other Medals.—

(1) In general.—If a decoration or medal involved in an offense described in subsection (a) is a distinguished-service cross awarded under [section 7272 of title 10](#), a Navy cross awarded under [section 8292 of title 10](#), an Air Force cross awarded under [section 9272 of title 10](#), a silver star awarded under section 7276, 8294, or 9276 of title 10, a Purple Heart awarded under [section 1129 of title 10](#), a [combat badge](#), or any replacement or duplicate medal for such medal as authorized by law, in lieu of the punishment provided in the applicable subsection, the offender shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than 1 year, or both.

(2) Combat badge defined.—in this subsection, the term “[combat badge](#)” means a Combat Infantryman’s Badge, Combat Action Badge, Combat Medical Badge, Combat Action Ribbon, or Combat Action Medal.

To make it short many groups and people are profiting from using Medals like, the Purple Heart, Silver Star, Bronze Star, and so on. We want this to stop and give the proper respect to the medals and have better control over the usage of the medals. Only veterans groups chartered by Congress should be the only ones able to use the medals for use of their programs that benefit the veterans they serve. We need to have this under control and not let the Badge or Medal be misused we owe that respect to our nation and the Veterans that earned them!!

Green Alert Proposal (Missing Veteran at Risk)

As a Veteran community, we take care of our own! It takes a strong person to admit that they need help. We as a veteran community need help, there are over 17-22 veteran suicides a day. As a combat-wounded veteran, I know what it is like to deal with the intrusive thoughts and battle within my mind daily. We now have a dedicated support system as well as coping skills after many years of mental health therapy. Many veterans that I interact with have yet to make that bridge. They still fight their daily battles and most of the time feel as if they are a burden on their friends and families. While also not having the tools needed to work through their crisis. Throughout each year we receive numerous calls, texts, emails, and social media messages from friends and families asking for help with locating a fellow veteran. We have conducted wellness checks, and we have asked for assistance from the local police as we have driven in sectors looking for veterans. Some of these have turned out positive but that is not always the case. They turned out positive because action was able to be taken sooner rather than later. In September of 2022 a joint study “Operation Deep Dive”² was conducted and released by America’s Warrior Partnership, University of Alabama, and Duke University. The study reviewed death statistics from eight states as a core sample and it concluded that there were thousands of confirmed and suspected suicides not included in the federal study. This study concludes that if the model follows through with the remaining states the rate increases to 44 veterans committing suicide a day. Our idea for this alert is along the same aspects of the Amber alert, Missing Endangered Child alert, Endangered Missing Adult (Senior/Silver) alert, and Blue alert. This proposal would fall under a National/Statewide Emergency Alert Program. As for the national level, our understanding is that it would fall under the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs who also is in charge of the National AMBER Alert.

Since the concept of this idea was back in September of 2016, Wisconsin has moved forward with the very same idea that was shared with a fellow Purple Heart recipient who also happens to be an attorney and helped get his proposal passed in Wisconsin. It is Wisconsin SB 473, reported approved by the Governor on 3-28-2018. 2017 Wisconsin Act 175 and here is part of the bill.

2017 WISCONSIN SENATE BILL 473

October 18, 2017 - Introduced by Senators Testin, Johnson, Marklein, Carpenter, Harsdorf, Hansen and Ringhand, cosponsored by Representatives Kleefisch, Goyke, Petryk, Anderson, Berceau, Edming, Milroy, Mursau, Ohnstad, Pope, Ripp, Sinicki, Tittl, Zepnick and Riemer. Referred to Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

An Act to amend 165.785 (1) (b) 2. 165.785 (2m) (a) 1. 165.785 (2m) (a) 2. 165.785 (2m) (b) and 175.51 (title); and to create 175.51 (1v) of the statutes; relating to: alerts for missing veterans who have service-related health condition.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

The Department of Justice currently administers an integrated crime alert network and may use the network to provide state agencies, law enforcement, or the public information regarding criminal activity, crime prevention, and missing or endangered persons. This bill requires the DOJ to allow law enforcement agencies to use the network to disseminate to broadcasters and outdoor advertisers reports of missing veterans or members of the armed forces who are at risk due to a physical or mental health condition that is related to their service.

This is an epidemic that will not subside by awareness alone and help is needed for the veteran community to ensure that we help our fellow veterans who are experiencing a crisis that they feel they are taking on alone. This bill will allow for action to be taken in a more expedited manner while providing resources and enabling veterans to get the care that is needed before drastic and permanent measures are taken by the distressed veteran.

Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)

As most of us know Military Retired Pay stops upon the death of the Retiree resulting in a substantial decrease in income for the surviving spouse or other eligible family members.

For those Retirees who elected to enroll in the Department of Defense Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), the surviving spouse or other eligible family members will receive a continuous annuity for the lifetime of the beneficiary. The annuity is based on a percentage of the Retiree's retired pay and pays the survivors an inflation-adjusted monthly income.

Eligible beneficiaries are defined as Spouse Only, Spouse and Children (children under 18 unless enrolled full-time in school, then age 22), Former Spouse, Children Only (under 18 unless enrolled full-time in school, then age 22), or Natural Interest Person.

A Military Retiree pays premiums for SBP coverage upon retiring. Premiums are paid from gross retired pay, so they don't count as income. This means less tax and less out-of-pocket costs for SBP. The premiums are partially funded by the government and the costs of operating the program are absorbed by the government, so the average premiums are well below the cost of a conventional insurance policy. For most Retirees, SBP is a good choice, but the government contribution is based on assumptions in average cases and may not apply equally to every situation. The maximum SBP annuity for a Spouse is based on 55 percent of the member's retired pay (or in the case of a member who retires under REDUX, the retired pay the member would have received if under the high-three retirement system). However, a smaller amount may be elected.

Sadly many covered Spouses pass away before the Military Retiree. If the covered Spouse dies before the Retiree, SBP premiums are suspended. By law SBP Spouse premiums cannot be refunded for any period that the Military Retiree had an eligible Spouse beneficiary.

Survivor Benefit Plan coverage may resume only if the Retiree remarries and is automatic on the first anniversary of the marriage or at the birth of a child, whichever comes first. However, in many cases due to age, disability, or out of love and loyalty to the deceased Spouse, the Retiree chooses not to remarry. In many cases, the Military Retiree is on a fixed income and may not have adequate medical or life insurance plans, if any, leaving the Retiree without means to cover costs associated with the health, death, and funeral of the covered Spouse. This hardly seems fair to a Military Retiree who wanted to ensure his/her Spouse had income after his/her death and now loses any rights, use, or benefit from the premiums he/she has paid over several years should the covered Spouse die before the Retiree.

Recently, the wife of one of the Military Order of the Purple Heart's Patriot's (member) in Arkansas passed away. The Patriot was enrolled in the DOD Survivor's Benefit Program (SBP) to ensure his wife had income after his death as he had always fully expected to die before her. However sadly, this turned out not to be the case.

Now that his wife is deceased, my Patriot asked if there is a mechanism to recover the money he paid into the SPB. We had to inform him that unfortunately the way the law was written, the answer is no. He then asked if part of the money could be returned to help pay for medical, hospice and/or funeral expenses. Again, the answer is no. He asked if the beneficiary could be changed, i.e., leave the SBP benefits to one of his [adult] children or grandchildren going to college. Again, no. We told him the only way any SBP money would be paid out was if he remarried and named his new wife as the beneficiary. The response was, "I'm 92 years old, the love of my life is gone, and I ain't going to remarry!" He then asked, "Where does the unpaid money go?" The answer is the "general fund".

I do not doubt that your office has received similar complaints or inquiries from many Veterans who have or are now facing the same dilemma regarding this type of situation. I have to agree that this hardly seems fair that a Veteran who wants to ensure his/her spouse has income after his/her death loses any rights, use, or benefit from the premiums he/she has paid over several years should the covered spouse die before the Veteran.

- Request that your office explore and sponsor legislation to change the SBP that in the event the covered spouse dies first, the Survivors Benefit Program will either:
- Return the premiums paid to the Veteran, until the death of the Veteran, at the same monthly rate that the covered spouse would have received.
- Allow the Veteran to apply for reimbursement of Medical, Hospice, and/or Funeral Expenses for the covered spouse and allow the Veteran's survivors to apply for reimbursement of his/her funeral upon his/her death.

Improved access to VA medical care for honorably discharged veterans 80 years old and older.

Military Order of the Purple Heart USA resolution for improved access to VA medical care for honorably discharged veterans 80 years old and older. Add under (b) Categories of veterans eligible to be enrolled. (4) *Any Honorably discharged veteran who is 80 years and 1 day old shall receive full access to VA medical care based solely on an honorable discharge and age. This would move the Veteran to at least a priority group 6.

38 U.S.C. 501 § 17.36 Enrollment—provision of hospital and outpatient care to veterans.

(a) *Enrollment requirement for veterans.*

(1) Except as otherwise provided in [§ 17.37](#), a veteran must be enrolled in the VA healthcare system as a condition for receiving the 'medical benefits package' set forth in [§ 17.38](#).

Note to paragraph (a) (1):

A veteran may apply to be enrolled at any time. (See [§ 17.36\(d\)\(1\)](#).)

(2) Except as provided in [paragraph \(a\)\(3\)](#) of this section, a veteran enrolled under this section and who, if required by law to do so, has agreed to make any applicable copayment is eligible for VA hospital and outpatient care as provided in the "medical benefits package" set forth in [§ 17.38](#).

Note to paragraph (a) (2):

A veteran's enrollment status will be recognized throughout the United States.

(3) A veteran enrolled based on having a disorder associated with exposure to a toxic substance or radiation, for a disorder associated with service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Gulf War (the period between August 2, 1990, and November 11, 1998), or any illness associated with service in combat in a war after the Gulf War or during a period of hostility after November 11, 1998, as provided in [38 U.S.C. 1710\(e\)](#), is eligible for VA care provided in the “medical benefits package” set forth in [§ 17.38](#) for the disorder.

(b) ***Categories of veterans eligible to be enrolled.*** The Secretary will determine which categories of veterans are eligible to be enrolled based on the following order of priority:

(1) Veterans with a singular or combined rating of 50 percent or greater based on one or more service-connected disabilities or unemployability; and veterans awarded the Medal of Honor.

(2) Veterans with a singular or combined rating of 30 percent or 40 percent based on one or more service-connected disabilities.

(3) Veterans who are former prisoners of war; veterans awarded the Purple Heart; veterans with a singular or combined rating of 10 percent or 20 percent based on one or more service-connected disabilities; veterans who were discharged or released from active military service for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty; veterans who receive disability compensation under [38 U.S.C. 1151](#); veterans whose entitlement to disability compensation is suspended pursuant to [38 U.S.C. 1151](#), but only to the extent that such veterans' continuing eligibility for that care is provided for in the judgment or settlement described in [38 U.S.C. 1151](#); veterans whose entitlement to disability compensation is suspended because of the receipt of military retired pay; and veterans receiving compensation at the 10 percent rating level based on multiple non-compensable service-connected disabilities that clearly interfere with normal employability.

(4) Veterans who receive increased pension based on their need for regular aid and attendance or by reason of being permanently housebound and other veterans who are determined to be catastrophically disabled by the Chief of Staff (or equivalent clinical official) at the VA facility where they were examined ****Any Honorably discharged veteran who is 80 years and 1 day old shall receive full access to VA medical care based solely on an honorable discharge and age.****

(5) Veterans not covered by [paragraphs \(b\)\(1\)](#) through [\(b\)\(4\)](#) of this section who are determined to be unable to defray the expenses of necessary care under [38 U.S.C. 1722\(a\)](#).

(6) Veterans of the Mexican border period or of World War I; veterans solely seeking care for a disorder associated with exposure to a toxic substance or radiation, for a disorder associated with service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Gulf War (the period between August 2, 1990, and November 11, 1998), or for any illness associated with service in combat in a war after the Gulf War or during a period of hostility after November

11, 1998, as provided and limited in [38 U.S.C. 1710\(e\)](#); Camp Lejeune veterans pursuant to [§ 17.400](#); and veterans with 0 percent service-connected disabilities who are nevertheless compensated, including veterans receiving compensation for inactive tuberculosis.

The purpose of this resolution is to improve access to VA healthcare for ALL honorably discharged veterans aged 80 and older. The Military Order of the Purple Heart USA is a congressionally chartered veteran's service organization made up of combat-wounded veterans and we value the honorable service of all our fellow veterans and seek an improvement to the quality of life for our fellow veterans who have reached a milestone of age and respected service.

I urge Congress to pass the Legislative issues present here today and show our Veterans that we are committed to supporting them in every way possible. It is the least we can do for those who have given so much to our country.

Chairmen Tester, Ranking Member Jerry Moran, and esteemed Members of the Committee, this concludes my statement. I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the MOPH, and I look forward to answering any questions you or other Committee members may have.

Yours in Patriotism,



**Carder Ferguson
National Commander
Military Order of the
Purple Heart**

Disclosure of Federal Grants and Contracts:

The Military Order of the Purple Heart (MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART) does not currently receive, nor has MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART ever received any federal money for grants or contracts.



Carder Ferguson National Commander

Ralph “Carder” Ferguson is the National Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, elected in 2023 at the 90th National Convention in Baton Rouge, LA.

Commander Ferguson was raised in Van Buren, Arkansas, and joined the Army in 1985, serving as an Infantryman. Commander Ferguson served approximately 10 years on active duty and then went into the Arkansas National Guard and spent approximately 12 years with the National Guard. Carder's first deployment was in October 2001 and was gone for almost a year came back for a year and redeployed again with the Arkansas 39th brigade.

Carder was the 3rd Platoon Sergeant with the 239th Combat Engineers and in May of 2004 was hit by a mortar round in Baghdad. After several surgeries and exhaustive rehabilitation Carder remained undaunted and was able to remain in the National Guard for around another year as the National Guard figured how to out process for retirement. Through Commander Ferguson's distinguished career, he earned several awards including the Purple Heart, 3 Meritorious Service Medals, 6 Achievement medals, and many other awards. He retired honorably in 2005 and currently resides in Fort Smith, Arkansas where he and his wife of 35 years Andrea raised two children Taylor and Jacob. Taylor is married to Paul Bochat and they have a son Philip. Jacob has just finished a 10-year stint in the United States Army as an artilleryman.

Carder began volunteering to assist combat-wounded veterans and their families with several Veterans Organizations as soon as he retired from the Guard and in 2009 finally realized that there was a veteran group for Purple Hearts so he joined them. Carder pushed all his efforts since joining the Military Order of the Purple Heart to work with the “Order” and with several other Veteran Service organizations in the Common goal of taking care of Veterans and their families.