



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 6, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: **Request for FAVORABLE Report** – SB0275 – Vehicle Laws – Special Registration Plates – Gold Star and Next of Kin Families

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC) and as its President, I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on **SB0275 – Vehicle Laws – Special Registration Plates – Gold Star and Next of Kin Families**, sponsored by the Chair at the request of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We applaud the Department of Veterans Affairs for initiating this legislation which will authorize the recipient of a Department of Defense Next of Kin lapel button to apply for special registration plates. The name and rank of the deceased service member will be displayed on the plate ensuring that the fallen warrior is specifically remembered.

We are gratified that the criterion for memorialization is not just a warrior who died on active duty but also a Reserve or National Guard warrior who lost their life while in drill status. Drill often involves training with weapons, heavy machinery, hazardous materials and dangerous situations. Including members of the Guard and Reserve who perish while in drill status ensures their sacrifice and name is remembered.

Finally, the MMC is very appreciative of the provision that the fees paid for the special license plates will be credited to the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund, which supports veterans and family members in need. Directing that the fees go to the Veterans Trust Fund, rather than the State's General Fund, represents a special way of honoring a fallen warrior by ensuring the monies aid the veteran community.

The bill fits into Governor Moore's commitment to make 2024 the Year of the Military Family in Maryland. As Governor Moore said in December 2023, "States have a duty to answer the service and sacrifice of our military families with strong support."

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups, representing over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers, and survivors.

We want to thank the Department of Veterans Affairs and Senator Smith for sponsoring this legislation and their continued strong support of the uniformed services community and families in Maryland.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JMS', written in a cursive style.

Jayson Spiegel
LTC USAR (Ret)
President

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

James P. Monahan
Air Force Sergeants Association

Steve P. May
American Military Society

Elwood R. Raphael Gray
American Minority Veterans Research Project

W. W. W.
Association of the United States Navy

Lynn A. Dask
Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

Wilbur B. Fisher
Disabled American Veterans

Seldon H. Freedy
Distinguished Flying Cross Association

Phyllis J. Collins
Fleet Reserve Association

Seldon H. Freedy
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Steve L. Brooker
Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association

Emmett R. Robert
Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Robert F. Winton
Military Officers Association of America

Charles E. Spahr
Military Order of the Purple Heart

E. J.
Montford Point Marines of America

M. L. Messer
National Association for Black Veterans

Michael P. Hays
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

Christian Andreasen
NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

John S.
Reserve Organization of America

Catherine L. McGraw
Society of Military Widows

E. J.
National Active and Retired Federal Employees
Veterans Affairs Directorate, NARFE MD

M. Blackwell
Veterans of Foreign Wars