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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 50th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

2023 Assembly Bill 243

*Relating to: Designating the Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield
Memorial Highway*

June 6, 2023

Assembly Committee on Transportation

Thank you, Chairwoman VanderMeer, for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 243, and thank you to the members of the committee for taking the time to hear my testimony.

Wisconsin has a long tradition of honoring our veterans of specific conflicts by designating a highway or bridge to commemorate their sacrifices and hard work. Currently, the state has dedicated highways for veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. We even have a bridge honoring veterans of the American Revolution.

Recently, I was approached by a veteran living in the 50th Assembly district who noticed that there is no such highway or bridge in Wisconsin to honor the service members who participated in the Gulf War.

President George H. W. Bush issued an order on August 7, 1990, to coordinate Operation Desert Shield as a response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. As a result, U.S. troops and resources were sent to the Persian Gulf alongside a coalition of 35 nations to defend Saudi Arabia and liberate Kuwait. On November 29, 1990, the United Nations Security Council authorized the use of "all means necessary" and after negotiations broke down between the U.S. and Iraq, Congress authorized President H. W. Bush to use American troops in the conflict.

Wisconsin mobilized an estimated 10,400 personnel that came from Active Duty, Reserve and National Guard components. Units from Appleton, Green Bay, Beloit, and Wausau were staged at Fort McCoy and Volk Field, and then departed throughout the fall and winter of 1990 to 1991.

On January 17, 1991, U.S. forces moved into the combat phase, dubbed Operation Desert Storm. This consisted of a naval and aerial bombardment, followed by a ground assault on February 24, 1991. This decisive action led to a ceasefire 100 hours after the ground campaign had begun. With the invaders repelled, U.S. forces shifted again. This time, it was for humanitarian missions, such as sorting out refugees and assisting with the Kuwaitis' reoccupation.

It is time that we show the same appreciation for our veterans of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm that has been given to veterans of other conflicts.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 249. I'd be happy to answer any questions at this time.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES



JUNE 6, 2023

Assembly Committee on Transportation

Testimony on Assembly Bill 243

Thank you, committee members, for hearing Assembly Bill 243, which would designate and mark State Highway 80 as the Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial Highway.

I am Mike "Gunner" Furgal, Legislative Co-Chairman of the Wisconsin Veterans of Foreign Wars. On behalf of Commander Michelle Rathke and our 23,878 members, we ask you to support AB 243.

Historically, Wisconsin has honored its veterans by designating a highway or a bridge to be commemorated in their honor. The state has designated highways for veterans of WWI, WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and Purple Heart recipients. It is past time for us to extend the same honor to the veterans of Desert Shield and Desert Storm. As one Desert Storm veteran said to me, "Love It! Glad to hear this! It's about time!"

The companion bill has passed the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government unanimously and has been placed on tomorrow's Senate calendar.

Thank you again to the committee for hearing AB 243 and your timely action on this bill. I'd be happy to answer any questions at this time.