

A White Paper Proposal To Establish A Nebraska Veterans Hall Of Fame

**Submitted By
Nebraska Veterans Coalition**



*"If your actions inspire others to dream more,
learn more, do more and become more, you
are a leader."*

– John Quincy Adams



Authority:

This White Paper has been approved for distribution on October 15, 2024 on behalf of the Nebraska Veterans Coalition.

Purpose:

This White Paper serves to outline the proposed establishment of a Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame and associated program management.

Distribution:

Distribution is unlimited. This will include, but it not limited to, Office of the Governor of Nebraska, Members of Nebraska's Legislators, the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans organizations in Nebraska, various media outlets, and all Nebraska military veterans.

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A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.

- Douglas MacArthur

Executive Summary

There are many Veterans in Nebraska paying it forward by volunteering to support other Veterans in our state, their families and our local communities. Many, or perhaps those going beyond the call of duty, are not receiving adequate recognition and honor for their outstanding contributions following military service. It is proposed that a Veterans Hall of Fame be established to recognize these special Nebraska Veterans serving others after service in uniform. Programs can be found in numerous other states around the country and Nebraska needs to join them with a similar program of honor.

A Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame is not intended to recognize solely a Veteran's military achievement and therefore should not be considered as a Military Hall of Fame.

Introduction

Our gratitude for the service of America's Veterans must go beyond patriotic parades and social media posts. It must translate into tangible actions that improve the lives of those who have given so much for our freedom and, once they have reentered our communities as a civilian, they continue to serve in many capacities to improve their communities, assisting their fellow Veterans and providing comfort to their families. It is the duty of Nebraska to pay public tribute to the men and women of prior military service who exemplify great character and service in accomplishing those important tasks.



There are over 100,000 Veterans residing right here in Nebraska. Their service spans from World War II to the recent global war on terrorism. Each of them has put their life on the line for our liberty and yet, in return, I believe that in Nebraska we are failing to honor those providing extraordinary support after service in uniform while defending America's freedom.



We see Veterans today in Nebraska serving in government, from local city committees positions to those in Legislature. We see Veterans commanding Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts, American Legion Posts, and other outstanding organizations established to support our Veterans, their family members and the communities where they reside. We see former Veterans establishing non-profits to help not only their brothers-in-arms, but our civilian communities. Most are accomplishing it without due recognition..

We must do better in the State of Nebraska.

In other States around the country we have seen development of a wonderful program to recognize and honor their Veterans. Known as the Veterans Hall of Fame, these programs can be found in Florida, Kentucky, Ohio, Arkansas, Connecticut, Arizona, and other States around the country. They are not military Hall of Fames; instead they seek to recognize Veterans for their countless contributions to society after their service.

Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame Proposal

Those states with established Veteran Hall of Fames have honored Veterans that have been leaders in a variety of areas such as arts, education, public service, volunteer activities, and community and business leadership. Most importantly, they are Veterans that have all made a significant impact on the lives of others and in their communities.

In general, following induction into these Veteran Hall of Fames, most members returned to their local organizations and communities and continued as they had before while giving incentive to others to do more in their areas.

Although bound together as honorees who had achieved one of the highest levels of recognition for veterans – they remained as individual contributors to society as an unharassed wealth of talented, experienced and motivated high performers with proven ability.



Most of the existing Veterans Hall of Fames across the country are administered and sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of the Office of the Governor. The Halls are managed by an appointed selection of Veterans from government positions, community positions, religious positions, and military organizations. In some instances, as recommended below, the Halls consist of three veterans and three members of highly rated State non-profit organizations.

Funding of the program, which in most instances would be less than \$10,000 annually, would be provided either by the Nebraska State Legislature or by the State Department of Veterans Affairs. Costs are attributed to such areas as plaques, certificates, travel costs to inductee ceremonies, etc. When you consider the amount of needed funding honoring these very special veterans for their contributions in Nebraska, it is insignificant.

To manage the program a Council can be appointed with funding provided by State or VA. Or, as we recommend, the creation of a Veterans Hall of Fame Foundation 501(c)(3) charitable organization to provide financial support for Hall of Fame functions. Private and general public donations would enable the Foundation to honor inductees. It is recommended that the Foundation should consist of a President, Vice President, Secretary, (each former military Veterans) and three Trustees appointed from Nebraska non-profit organizations with one serving as Treasurer. Each of the judges to be appointed by the Governor of Nebraska or the Director of Nebraska Veterans Affairs. The selected staff will be responsible for fund raising, program management, selection of annual inductees, and all other related duties. The President would only vote in the selection process should there be a tie by the other six members.



Recommended Nomination Application

Attachment one provides a recommended application form to be completed by submitting individuals for submission to the Council (or Foundation if so formed).

Nomination Guidelines

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Should the State of Nebraska establish the Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame to recognize and honor those military Veterans who, through their contributions during or after military service have made a significant impact in the State of Nebraska, the following guidelines are recommended:

a. Meets the definition of "Veteran" as defined by Nebraska Revised Statute 48-225 as determined by the Department of Defense documentation, such as a DD Form 214, or proof of service from the Nebraska National Guard with an NGB Form 22.



b. Received an honorable discharge from the United States Armed Forces and provided official documentation verifying discharge status.

c. Has exhibited good moral character.

d. Posthumous nominations will be accepted. Records to document military service will still be required. If no DD Form 214 or NGB Form 22 is available, they will provide other documentation to include discharge papers, news articles, affidavits, official letters of service from their branch of service, the DoD, or the Nebraska National Guard, or other documentation that can be verified. (To obtain copy of military service records, they can go to www.archives.gov/veterans)

e. Employees of the Governor's staff, all elected or appointed officials in the State of Nebraska, members of County Veteran Service Offices and members of the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Veterans Hall of Fame Council (or Foundation if so formed) should be ineligible for induction until two years after they have left their position. The Council (or Foundation if so formed) may recommend a waiver of the two-year requirement for nominees over the age of 70 or are deceased.

f. Preference should be given to Veterans who were born in Nebraska or adopted Nebraska as their home state or base of operation

g. The selection process should be conducted using inputs received from the attached nomination form. It will be made available for download on the Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame website at *(to be developed upon approval of this program)* and is to be submitted to the Nebraska Veterans' Hall of Fame Council (or Foundation if so formed) either by mail or e-mail. The Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame submission period is from January 1, 20XX until May 31, 20XX or until the initial 25 nominations are received; whichever occurs first.



h. The Council (or Foundation if so formed) would review only the first 25 submissions received meeting predetermined criteria. Reviewing those inputs, they will vote on and recommend a list of up to 10 top candidates to the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs for submission to the Governor and Cabinet for final selection of up to 5 inductees.

The Nomination Packet

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In order for the submission process to uniformly portray the efforts and contributions of our great Nebraska veterans, it is suggested the nomination packet along with the completed application form is completed in accordance with the following format and instructions:

Section 1. Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame Nomination Form:

Ensure information about the nominee is accurate and current, particularly concerning contact information. This form requires the nominator's signature to validate the accuracy of the information and that it follows the nomination guidelines. In the case of a deceased nominee, please provide the name of next of kin along with contact information.



Section 2: Verification of Veteran's Status:

Provide the full name, rank and branch of service of the nominee. Attach all copies of official documents verifying veteran's service (e.g. DOD Form 214 or NGB Form 22). Please note the earlier comments regarding the information required for a deceased nominee. Provide the best supporting documentation available.

Section 3: Summary of Education and Training Accomplishments:

Provide a simple chronology of education and training accomplishments. List or attached any significant achievements, recognitions, etc. List schools attended, degrees obtained, and any academic awards earned. Vocational or technical training and schools; professional training programs completed and dates; and any other community training programs to include volunteer firefighter, Red Cross, etc. may also be included.

Section 4: Summary of the Nominee's Professional or Employment History:

Provide a simple chronology of professional and employment history to include: history of employers/companies/businesses; positions and promotions; professional publications and presentations; professional awards, recognition and certificates. Attach any significant awards, recognitions, etc. that may be pertinent.

Section 5: Summary of Nominee's Advocacy on Behalf of Veterans:

Summarize any contributions and recognition of the nominee in relation to veterans' advocacy or veterans' support programs or initiatives. This may include the nominee's active involvement with Veterans' Organizations, community patriotic projects and committees and participation/support for patriotic events, etc.

Section 6: Summary of Nominee's Civic Activities and Contributions:

Summarize the nominee's volunteer activities, civic activities and contributions; elected or appointed offices held; civic or fraternal affiliations and contributions.



Section 7: List Any Awards or Honors:

Includes: Presidential awards, Who's Who, Citizen of the Year, Veterans organizations awards, Nebraska county or city awards, etc.

Section 8: Written Narrative:

Explanation of why this individual should be considered for the Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame. This comprehensive description should explain what the significant contributions the nominee made to the State of Nebraska in civic, business, public service or other pursuits. Military records, alone, without supporting documentation of a veteran's contribution to other veterans and their community will not be considered.



The nomination packet should not exceed ten (10) pages on 8-1/2" x 11" single-sided paper with a font size no smaller than 12 pt. The packet includes discharge papers and the required nomination form. If the nomination packet exceeds ten pages, the nomination packet will not be considered. Letters alone without supporting documents recommending the nominee for inclusion in the Hall of Fame should not be considered. Multiple nominations for a single individual are discouraged. Nomination packets for those not selected may be revised and resubmitted for subsequent nomination periods.

All materials provided to the Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame are public records and are subject to disclosure upon request. Submissions to the Council (or Foundation if so formed) containing information of a confidential or personal nature that would not be publicly released. The nomination packets and attachments become the property of the Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame and will not be returned. Original documents should not be submitted because they will not be returned.

All nominators after providing their name on the nomination form should state their relationship to the nominee and contact information. Examples may include: self, next of kin, family member, admirer, co-worker, etc.

Please note: **Only the nominator will be notified if the nominee is NOT selected.**

Nomination packets must be received no later than a specified date contained in the media inputs. They should be mailed or emailed to a single responsible individual for dissemination to the Council (or Foundation if so formed).

Recommendation

The Office of the Governor of Nebraska in conjunction with the Director of Nebraska Veterans Affairs establish a Nebraska Veterans Hall of Fame program with a Council or Foundation as management. Appoint members to respective positions within this staff. A specified amount of funding to be provided to initiate the program and, if so decided, the establishment of a nonprofit for subsequent fundraising needs.

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