



Monroe County Legislature

MERCEDES VAZQUEZ SIMMONS
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATURE

MERCEDES VAZQUEZ SIMMONS
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE LEGISLATURE
AND LEGISLATOR – DISTRICT 22
COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 408
39 WEST MAIN STREET
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14614
OFFICE: (585) 281-2540
E-MAIL: MERCEDES22@GMAIL.COM

April 3, 2024

Chairman William B. Magnarelli
Transportation Committee
LOB 830
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Chairman Magnarelli,

I am writing to you to encourage your support of Assembly Bill A1152/Senate Bill S5657 titled “Creates a Distinctive License Plate for Veterans Honoring Borinqueneers” currently pending your approval in Transportation.

As the daughter of a civil rights hero who fought alongside the Hon. John R. Lewis for passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, I am fiercely devoted to making certain that equity for our citizens is distributed equally to all – most importantly our US veterans. The 65th Infantry fought in World War I, World War II with Engagements in Naples-Foggia, Central Europe, and the Battle of the Rhineland, and in the Korean War Engagements of Operation Killer, Battle of Cherwon, Jackson Heights, and Outpost Kelly. On June 4, 1920, the regiment was officially renamed 65th Infantry.

We must honor and should give recognition to those soldiers who never made it back home. A total of 61,000 Puerto Ricans served in the military during the Korean War, and around 90% of the Puerto Ricans who saw action in Korea were volunteers. Their recognition sadly has been slow to obtain.

It wasn't until March of 2014 that the 65th Infantry Honor Task Force organized the salute of the first Medal of Honor awarded to a Borinqueneer, MSG Juan E. Negron in our home state of New York. In early 2021, President Joseph Biden signed into law recognizing April 13th as “National Day of Borinqueneers” so that veterans could commemorate the service of Borinqueneers. April 13th was chosen because it was the day when members of the unit received a Congressional Gold Medal in 2016 from then President Barack Obama.

It's a long stretch in history from the official renaming in 1920 to the 2014 award of the first Medal of Honor given to a Borinqueneer or in 2016 the honor of a Congressional Gold Medal, and again in 2021 a National Day of Honor.

There are less than 500 surviving original Borinqueneers remaining with us. As the mother of a son currently serving in the United States Army, I humbly request your timely support of the passage of this Bill granting those Borinqueneers still with us the opportunity to proudly display what they have rightfully earned on their license plates. If it were at all possible to pass this Bill so that your efforts could be celebrated across New York State on National Borinqueneers Day on April 13th, it would be incredible.

I have included a listing of the license plates currently granted to our veterans and am proud that New York recognizes so many veterans group(s) and awards. Let's take the final step to make certain we rightfully and respectfully honor all those who have served this nation with pride, including the members of the 65th Infantry – our Borinqueneers.

Branches of Military Service

1. Air Force Reserve
2. Air National Guard
3. Airborne
4. Army National Guard
5. Army Reserve
6. Coast Guard Auxiliary
7. Coast Guard Reserve
8. Marine Corps Reserve
9. Naval Militia
10. Navy Reserve
11. State Guard
12. US Naval Armed Guard

Medals and Awards

1. Former Prisoner of War
2. Combat Infantrymen
3. Congressional Medal of Honor
4. Purple Heart Recipient (vehicle)
5. Purple Heart Recipient (motorcycle)

Military and Veterans Communities

1. American Legion
2. AMVETS
3. Catholic War Veterans of America
4. Disabled American Veteran (vehicle)
5. Disabled American Veteran (motorcycle)
6. Disabled Veteran
7. Eighth Air Force Historical Society
8. Gold Star Mother
9. Jewish War Veterans of America
10. Marine Corps League (vehicle)
11. Marine Corps League (motorcycle)
12. Saratoga National Cemetery Honor Guard Association
13. United States Military Academy - West Point
14. US Air Force Veteran
15. US Air Force Veteran (motorcycle)
16. US Army Veteran
17. US Army Veteran (motorcycle)
18. US Coast Guard Veteran
19. US Marine Corps Veteran

20. Marine Corps Veteran (motorcycle)
21. US Navy Veteran
22. US Navy Veteran (motorcycle)
23. US Submarine Veterans
24. US Veteran (vehicle)
25. US Veteran (motorcycle)
26. Veterans of Foreign Wars
27. Vietnam Veterans of America
28. 40 & 8 - The Grande Voiture du New York, La Societe Des Quarante Hommes et Huit Chevaux

Wars and Battles

1. Korean War Veterans
2. Pearl Harbor Survivor
3. Persian Gulf Veteran
4. Vietnam Veteran (vehicle)
5. Vietnam Veteran (motorcycle)
6. War on Terror Veteran
7. World War II Veterans

I thank you in advance for your time and consideration in reviewing my request. Please know that I truly look forward to favorable action on your part to help make this a part of history with your signature. We can change the delays to make certain that this Bill is passed in a timely fashion to ensure the recognition the 65th Infantry deserves. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely yours,



Mercedes Vazquez Simmons
Vice-President
Monroe County Legislature