



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

William Larkin

U.S. Postal Service Makes Purple Heart Stamp "Forever"

WILLIAM LARKIN April 13, 2011

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An effort to honor military heroes that began in the New York State Senate 11 years ago has now resulted in the U.S. Postal Service announcing that the Purple Heart postage stamp has been classified as a “Forever” stamp, ensuring that it will continue in circulation.

The campaign to create the Purple Heart Stamp was started in January 2000 by Senator Bill Larkin (R-C, Cornwall-On-Hudson), a 23 year Army combat veteran. After a massive letter writing effort by the Military Order of the Purple Heart and other veterans organizations,

the stamp was first issued in 2003. Since that time, a letter writing effort to continue the Purple Heart stamp had to be conducted each time the price of a first class letter changed to ensure the stamp would continue.

The new classification as a "Forever" stamp, means that Purple Heart postage stamp will continue in circulation and supporters will no longer need to advocate to maintain it each time the price of stamps increases.

"From General George Washington to General David Petraeus, our military leaders have awarded the Purple Heart to honor almost two million Americans who have been wounded in battle," Senator Larkin said. "I appreciate the cooperation of the U.S. Postal Service and their recognition of the importance of this stamp to honor our military heroes."

"It serves as a constant reminder of the tremendous sacrifices American young men and women have made in battle, fighting for freedom around the world," Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said. "To all our veterans and to those serving now, they have no better friend than Senator Bill Larkin, who began the Purple Heart stamp effort, established the Purple Heart Hall of Honor in the Hudson Valley and makes certain that everyone fighting for our country is remembered every day."

The U.S. Postal Service will officially unveil and issue the Purple Heart "Forever" stamp in San Diego on May 5, 2011.

The Purple Heart is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to members of the U.S. military who have been wounded or killed in action. According to the Military Order of the Purple Heart, an organization for combat-wounded veterans, the medal is "the oldest military decoration in the world in present use and the first award made available to a common soldier."

On August 7, 1782, during the Revolutionary War, General George Washington issued an order that established a badge of distinction for meritorious action. The badge, which consisted of a heart made of purple cloth, is known to have been awarded to three sergeants from Connecticut regiments. Known as the Badge of Military Merit, the award was distinctive because it was available to the lower ranks at a time when only officers were eligible for decoration in European armies. "The road to glory in a patriot army," Washington wrote, "is thus open to all."

Although not continued after the Revolutionary War, the decoration was reinstated by the U.S. War Department (now the Department of Defense) on February 22, 1932, the 200th anniversary of Washington's birth. The redesigned decoration consists of a purple heart of metal bordered by gold, suspended from a purple and white ribbon. In the center of the medal is a profile of George Washington beneath his family coat of arms.