



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Owen H. Johnson

U.S. Postal Service Makes Purple Heart Stamp “Forever”

OWEN H. JOHNSON May 5, 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 new classification as a “Forever” stamp means that Purple Heart postage stamps will continue in circulation and supporters will no longer need to advocate to maintain it each time the price of stamps increase.

The U.S. Postal Service officially unveiled and issued the Purple Heart “Forever” stamp in San Diego on May 5, 2011.

“The Purple Heart “Forever” stamp is a fitting expression of our gratitude and admiration for the men and women who have made great sacrifices defending our freedom around the world,” Senator Owen H. Johnson said. “Their meritorious service to our nation deserves this special recognition.”

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.

“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.”

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.

"To all of our veterans, this Purple Heart "Forever" stamp will be a constant reminder of the tremendous sacrifices those honorable men and women fighting for our country and our freedom have made," Senator Johnson concluded.