



OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER ANITA BONDS
CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION AND LABOR
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

October 30, 2024

Nyasha Smith, Secretary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Smith,

Today, along with Councilmembers Allen, McDuffie, and Henderson, I am introducing the **“Purple Heart License Plate Amendment Act of 2024.”** Please find enclosed a signed copy of the legislation, which amends Title IV of the District of Columbia Revenue Act of 1937 by requiring the Mayor to design and issue specialty motor vehicle identification tags honoring Purple Heart Award recipients in the District of Columbia.

The Purple Heart Award dates back to August 7, 1782, when General George Washington established the Badge of Military Merit. The award sought to recognize any soldiers who performed a distinguished act of merit, permitting an honoree “to wear, on his facings, over his left breast, the figure of a heart in purple cloth or silk edged with narrow lace or binding.”¹ On the 200th anniversary of George Washington’s birth, General Douglas MacArthur revived the award with a new design by Elizabeth Will featuring the profile of George Washington against a purple heart.² Washington’s coat of arms, which also inspired the flag of the District of Columbia, sits above the profile and below the purple draping.

Today’s Purple Heart Award is awarded to a member of any branch of the Armed Forces who is wounded or killed by enemy action. Notably, not all awardees sustain temporary or permanent disabilities as a result of wounds sustained in service, nor are all disabilities recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs associated with the Purple Heart Award. This issue was recently brought to the Council’s attention by retired U.S. Army Captain Eric Rudberg, who noted that, unlike most other states, the District of Columbia does not offer a specific license

¹ *History of the Purple Heart*, <https://www.mynavyhr.navy.mil/Portals/55/Career/RecordsManagement/Purple-Heart-History.pdf?ver=A3Qs3aiH6m0Ey17bm7L9Hg%3D%3D>. Accessed 24 Oct. 2024.

² U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. *Celebrating America’s Freedoms*, <https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/celebrate/purple-heart.pdf>. Accessed 24 Oct. 2024.

plate for Purple Heart recipients. While the District of Columbia does offer a “Disabled Veteran” license plate, a Purple Heart awardee may not qualify if their particular injury did not result in a disability. The distinction excludes service members who should be recognized for their contribution to the country.

This legislation will require the Mayor to establish separate license plate tags to honor not only Purple Heart Awardees but also any surviving spouse or child, in recognition of the ultimate sacrifice that many make. The award establishes a minimal one-time application fee of \$10 and annual display fee of \$10 to be deposited into the Office of Veterans Affairs Fund.

Should you have any questions about this legislation, please contact Elspeth Callahan, Legislative Director, at ecallahan@dccouncil.gov.

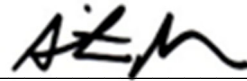
Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ANB', is positioned above the name Anita Bonds.

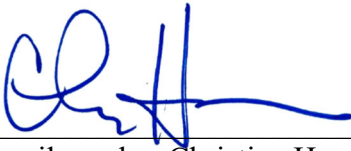
Anita Bonds

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3 Councilmember Charles Allen



Councilmember Anita Bonds

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8 Councilmember Christina Henderson



Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie

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16 A BILL

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19 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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22 To amend the District of Columbia Revenue Act of 1937 to require the Mayor to design and
23 make available for issue a motor-vehicle identification tag that identifies the owner of a
24 motor vehicle as a recipient of the Purple Heart award or as the surviving spouse or child
25 of a Purple Heart award recipient.

26
27 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
28 act may be cited as the “Purple Heart License Plate Amendment Act of 2024”.

29 Sec. 2. Title IV of the District of Columbia Revenue Act of 1937, approved August 17,
30 1937 (50 Stat. 679; D.C. Official Code § 50-1501.01 *et seq.*), is amended by adding a new
31 section 2o to read as follows:

32 “Sec. 2o. Issuance of Purple Heart award recipient motor vehicle identification tags.

33 “(a) The Mayor shall design and issue motor vehicle identification tags with a design,
34 identifying words, or emblem that designates the owner of the motor vehicle as a Purple Heart
35 Award recipient or as the surviving spouse or child of a Purple Heart recipient.

36 “(b)(1) A resident ordering a motor vehicle identification tag for Purple Heart Recipients
37 shall pay a one-time application fee and a display fee each year thereafter. The application fee
38 shall be \$10 and the display fee shall be \$10, or other amounts as may be established by the
39 Mayor by rule.

40 “(2) The application fee and annual display fee shall be deposited in the Office of
41 Veterans Affairs Fund, established by section 705 of the Office of Veterans Affairs
42 Establishment Act of 2001, effective October 3, 2001 (D.C. Law 14-28, D.C. Official Code § 49-
43 1004).

44 “(c) The Mayor shall require documentation proving a recipient has been issued a Purple
45 Heart Award.

46 “(d) The Mayor may issue rules and regulations as are necessary to carry out the purposes
47 of this act.”.

48 Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

49 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
50 impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975,
51 approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

52 Sec. 4. Effective date.

53 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by
54 the Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto) and a 30-day period of Congressional
55 review as provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved
56 December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code §1-206.02(c)(1)).