

The White House Commission on Remembrance

by Charles P McDowell, updated by Ron Fischer

The White House Commission on Remembrance was established by Public Law 106-579 in 2000 and is the only White House commission to be established by law. It was created as an independent agency of government with a ten year mission to “(1) sustain the American spirit through acts of remembrance on Memorial Day and throughout the year; (2) to institutionalize the National Moment of Remembrance; (3) to enhance the commemoration and understanding of Memorial Day; and, (4) to educate and give the younger generation a sense of our history and what it means to be an American.” The Commission operates on a very limited annual budget (\$250,000), but is authorized to license products, collect royalties, and to enter into legal agreements.

Starting in 1906 the Commission wanted to present special gold medals to the children of military personnel who were killed in Afghanistan or Iraq. The design of the medal was developed by the Institute of Heraldry and the medals were manufactured at no cost to the government by Ira Green (a major medal manufacturer certified by the Government). In order to receive the medal, the son or daughter had to be physically present at the ceremony, which was held in Washington, D.C. on May 21, 2006. The medals were presented by General Peter Pace (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and Jim Nicholson (Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs).(1)

Since 1906 the Commission has made progress with the creation and award a Gold Medal of Remembrance program, which honors children of men and women killed in the Global War on Terror. Award of the medal is made in national and local ceremonies during the annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony. This is done in conjunction with a Ceremony at the US Capitol and the launch of “Old Glory’s Journey of Remembrance”-a nationwide flag raising effort that culminates on Memorial Day in observance of the National Moment of Remembrance. The medal was Designed by the Institute of Heraldry, which provides special services to the US Armed Forces, federal agencies, and the Office of the President. This uniquely beautiful medal and its associated certificate are a truly special American tradition. In the first two years, over 200 Gold Medals were presented to children

of fallen service members from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The first 180 of these were imparted at the Time of Remembrance Tribute on the National Mall in Washington D.C in 2006. Since then others are being given at special ceremonies across the nation and overseas throughout the year. The Commission on Remembrance aims to ensure every child in our country who has lost a mother or father receives this precious medal.

For more information on any of the Commission's special programs and activities, please contact us at (202)783-4665 or via email at: commission@remember.gov
(2)

Recently the Commission has had a bill introduced a bill before congress to recognize the medal:

H.R. 1926 (112th): Gold Medal of Remembrance for the Sons and Daughters of Our Fallen Act

112th Congress, 2011–2013. Text as of May 13, 2011 (Introduced).

I

112TH CONGRESS

1ST SESSION

H. R. 1926

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 13, 2011

MR. ROHRABACHER (for himself, MR. OWENS, and MR. GIBSON) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To provide for the design, production, and presentation of a Gold Medal of Remembrance to the children of members of the Armed Forces who die while

serving on active duty in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn, and for other purposes.

1. Short title

This Act may be cited as the **Gold Medal of Remembrance for the Sons and Daughters of Our Fallen Act**.

2. Department of Defense recognition of children of members of the Armed Forces who die while serving on active duty in certain military operations

(a) Establishment and presentation of medal

Chapter 57 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 1126 the following new section:

1126a. Gold Medal of Remembrance: eligibility and presentation

(a) Eligibility and presentation

A medal, to be known as the *Gold Medal of Remembrance*, shall be presented to a child of a member of the armed forces, regardless of the age of the child, to identify and recognize the child when the member—

- (1) dies while serving on active duty in support of a covered military operation; or
- (2) dies as a result of wounds, injuries, or illness incurred while serving on active duty in support of a covered military operation.

(b) Design and manufacture

The Gold Medal of Remembrance shall be composed of gold-plate over bronze and shall be of such design and specifications as the Secretary concerned may determine. The Gold Medal of Remembrance is a national medal for purposes of section 5111 of title 31.

(c) Funds for procurement and presentation

The Secretary concerned may authorize the use of appropriated funds to procure Gold Medals of Remembrance and to provide for their presentation to children of members of the armed forces described in subsection (a).

(d) Relation to other presentations

The child of a member of the armed forces described in subsection (a) may receive a Gold Medal of Remembrance in addition to a Gold star lapel button under section 1126 of this title and a medal presented by the White House Commission on Remembrance.

(e) Presentation ceremonies

It is the sense of Congress that, to the extent practicable, Gold Medals of Remembrance, should be presented to children of members of the armed forces described in subsection (a) by military commanders in ceremonies recognizing the support and sacrifice of children of members of the armed forces.

(f) Definitions

In this section:

(1) The term *child*, with respect to a member of the armed forces described in subsection (a), means—

(A) a legitimate child;

(B) an adopted child;

(C) a stepchild; and

(D) a person who was placed in the home of the member by a placement agency (recognized by the Secretary of Defense), or by any other source authorized by State or local law to provide adoption placement, in anticipation of the legal adoption of the person by the member.

(2) The term *covered military operation* means—

(A) Operation Enduring Freedom;

(B) Operation Iraqi Freedom; or

(C) Operation New Dawn.

(g) Regulations

The Secretary of Defense shall issue such regulations as may be necessary to carry out this section. The Secretary shall ensure that the regulations are uniform for each armed force to the extent practicable.

(b) Clerical amendment

The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1126 the following new item:

1126a. Gold Medal of Remembrance: eligibility and presentation.

(c) Retroactive application

Section 1126a of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to deaths of members of the Armed Forces described in such section occurring any time after September 11, 2001. The bill was referred to committee.

The Medal

The obverse consists of a brushed gold medal with a gold polished star throughout (with a brushed gold flame in its center). Rays of light emit from behind the star, which is surrounded by laurel leaves. The star and flame symbolize remembrance. The gold star dates back to World War I and alludes to a member of the Armed Forces killed in action.

The reverse displays a polished star in the upper portion of the medal, with the inscription **IN REMEMBERANCE** above the star and **OF YOUR FAMILY'S / SACRIFICE / FOR OUR / COUNTRY** below the star.

The ribbon is unusual. It consists of a field of purple (suggested by the Purple Heart); to one side is a stripe of black (for sacrifice) and on the other side are red, white and blue pinstripes, which represents the United States. Approximately 1,000 of these medals were produced initially and it appears that this medal is going to be used in the future.

The award package consists of a cased medal and award document.



Drawing of the medal as used on the Award Document and box



Pictures of the Medal of Remembrance from Newspaper articles

Now let us look at some of the Award Ceremonies from Newspaper articles:

[Gold Medal of Remembrance, Children of Fallen Troops honored; Award shows nation's support](#)

By Sean Lengell, This article appeared in The Washington Times on October 30, 2007

The sons and daughters of servicemen who lost their lives while serving in Iraq were awarded the Gold Medal of Remembrance yesterday at a ceremony on Capitol Hill.

Congress created the award to recognize children of military personnel killed in the line of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"A loss on the battlefield is also a terrible loss at home," said Sen. Daniel K. Akaka, Hawaii Democrat and co-host of the afternoon ceremony at the Russell Senate Office Building.

The ceremony was organized by the White House Commission on Remembrance and attended by Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Gen. George Casey, Army chief of staff. Sen. James M. Inhofe, Oklahoma Republican, was the event's other co-host.

"I had no idea so many people mourned and prayed with us; it's just amazing," said award recipient Cali Baldwin, 11, of Gulfport, Miss., whose father, Navy Builder Chief Joel E. Baldwin, was killed in a 2004 suicide bombing in Mosul, Iraq.

Others honorees were:

* Kelsi, 14, and Evan Lamberson, 11, whose father, Army Sgt. 1st Class Randall L. Lamberson of Springfield, Mo., died from injuries sustained when his Humvee hit a roadside bomb last year in Ramadi, Iraq.

* Chandler, 13, Elle, 11, and Bailey Downs, 10, whose father, Air Force Maj. William "Brian" Downs, stationed at Hurlburt Field, Fla., was killed in 2005 in Diyala province in eastern Iraq, in a crash of an Iraqi air force aircraft during a training mission.

* Helena, 9, and Rachel Edge, 4, daughters of Marine Capt. James C. Edge of Virginia Beach, who was killed by enemy fire in Ramadi, Iraq, in 2005, were not present and will receive their award later. Sen. John W. Warner, Virginia Republican, accepted the award on behalf of the family.

* Nicole Engeman, 22, daughter of Army Chief Warrant Officer John W. Engeman of East Northport, N.Y., who was killed in Iraq last year, received the medal during a ceremony at the Pentagon earlier in the day. Her brother, Army Lt. Patrick Engeman, 22, was presented with the award simultaneously in Iraq, where he is serving. The ceremonies were connected through a video teleconferencing link.

"It has almost been two years, and I've almost gotten to the point where I can say his name without crying, and I come here and I've been crying the whole time," said Miss Engeman of Bluefield, W.Va. "But it's also eye-opening to see so many other kids here, and my heart just goes out to them."(3)

Children of Fallen Troops Honored at Remembrance Ceremonies

By Gerry J. Gilmore and John J. Kruzal, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Oct. 30, 2007 – Ten children of service members killed during the war on terrorism were honored for their sacrifices on behalf of the nation at ceremonies held here and in Iraq yesterday.



Since 2006 (first two years), more than 200 Gold Medals of Remembrance like these have been presented to children of fallen U.S. service members who have died in Afghanistan or Iraq. Photo by Gerry J. Gilmore

At the Russell Senate Office Building last evening, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Michael G. Mullen and Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. were among the luminaries who participated in a recognition ceremony sponsored by the White House Commission on Remembrance.

Each child received a gold medal and a certificate signed by Mullen and Gordon H. Mansfield, acting secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mullen saluted the children, noting that family support of service members engaged in the war on terrorism is of paramount importance.

“We are indebted to each family who supports the 2.4 million men and women who serve today,” the admiral said. “And those that we honor tonight are true heroes.”

Mullen acknowledged the difficulty in summoning the appropriate words to salve the children’s loss.

The children’s medals, Mullen said, are “intended to be a reminder, not just for you, but (also) for us, of the ultimate sacrifice of your fathers.”

“May each of you take comfort in the knowledge that our nation will forever honor and cherish and remember the great legacy of valor your parents left us,” Mansfield told the children.

Those recognized at last night’s Capitol Hill ceremony include:

-- Kelsi Lamberson, 14, and Evan Lamberson, 11. Their father, Army Sgt. 1st Class Randall L. Lamberson, 36, died on April 10, 2006, from injuries suffered when the truck he was riding in struck a roadside bomb in Ramadi, Iraq. Lamberson also is survived by his wife, Dana.

-- Helena Edge, 9, and Rachel Edge, 4. Their father, Marine Capt. James C. Edge, 31, was killed by enemy small-arms fire in Ramadi, Iraq, on April 14, 2005. He also is survived by his wife, Krissy.

-- Cali Baldwin, 11. Her father, Navy Chief Petty Officer Joel E. Baldwin, 37, was one of 14 service members killed in a suicide bombing in Mosul, Iraq, on Dec. 21, 2004. He also is survived by his wife, Claudia.

-- Patrick Engeman, 24, and Nicole Engeman, 22. Their father, Army Chief Warrant Officer John W. Engeman, 45, was killed on May 14, 2006, in Baghdad when the truck he was riding in struck a roadside bomb.

-- Chandler Downs, 13, Elle Downs, 11, and Bailey Downs, 10. Their father, Air Force Maj. William "Brian" Downs, 40, was killed on May 30, 2005, in eastern Diyala province, Iraq, in a crash of an Iraqi air force plane during a training mission. Downs' wife, Beth, attended the ceremony with her three children.

The evening ceremony "was incredibly moving," Beth Downs said. "We just appreciate it very much."

Her eldest son, Chandler, was equally impressed.

"I'm just really proud of my Dad," he said, "because all these people would take the time out of their day just to remember my Dad. It's cool."

Chandler's younger brother, Bailey, expressed happiness that "all these people are thinking about me."

"I think this ceremony is really very kind and generous, that these people would take their time out to think about us," daughter Elle Downs said. "I think that it is very special."

Recognizing children of fallen service members shows "that their fellow Americans care about their great sacrifice and their parents' great sacrifice," Carmella LaSpada, director of the White House Commission on Remembrance, explained at the Capitol Hill ceremony.

"When they look at that medal, they'll know that it comes from a grateful nation," LaSpada added.

Engeman's daughter and son received their gold medals yesterday during earlier ceremonies. At the Pentagon, Gen. Casey presented a medal to Nicole Engeman. Meanwhile, via video teleconference from Baghdad, Army Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, commander of Multinational Corps Iraq, conferred the medal on Army 1st Lt. Patrick Engeman.

Their late father served with 1st Battalion, 312th Training Support Battalion, 4th Brigade, 78th Division, Fort Bragg, N.C. Engleman worked on a transition team that trained Iraqi security forces to assume control from coalition forces. The mission of such trainers is "extremely

important to our overall success in Iraq,” said Casey, whose father was killed during the Vietnam War.

“I think this is also a good opportunity to remind ourselves of the magnificent work that our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan and what’s at stake here,” Casey said at the Pentagon award ceremony.

“Your husband and your dad died to preserve (American) ideals and our way of life,” Casey told the widow and two children who survive Engeman. “And we will never forget that.”

In Iraq, Odierno placed the medal around the neck of 1st Lt. Engeman, who the general referred to as “a great young leader.” Engeman is a platoon leader nearing his fifteenth month of deployment.

“I think it says a lot about his dad that Patrick chose to be in the Army, too,” Odierno said. “I know he’s living up to his dad’s expectations.” (4)

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, Oct. 29, 2007) - The Army honored the children of fallen-hero Chief Warrant Officer 4 John W. Engeman today, in a ceremony split between the Pentagon and Baghdad that was a time of tears, laughter and above all, pride.

Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr. presented the Gold Medal of Remembrance to CW4 Engeman's daughter Nicole Engeman at the Pentagon while at the same time via video teleconference Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, commander of Multinational Corps-Iraq, presented the medal to 1st Lt. Patrick Engeman, a platoon leader with the 10th Mountain Division, in Baghdad.

Sponsored by the White House Commission on Remembrance, the Gold Medal of Remembrance was created in 2006 to honor children who have lost a mother or father during operations in Iraq or Afghanistan. According to Carmella LaSpada, the commission's director, the medal is the first of its kind to recognize children for their sacrifices in war.

"We're a nation of symbols," she said. "We came up with something they could have the rest of their lives, and every time that they would hold this and see this, they would know that there is a grateful nation who recognizes the sacrifices of their fathers."

Gen. Casey said the first remembrance ceremony he attended on Memorial Day was "heart wrenching." The service chiefs were supposed to present the medals and leave, but he said they couldn't do that. They ended up going forward and embracing the children, who ranged from a few months old to their 20s.

Having lost his own father in Vietnam, Gen. Casey said he was especially sympathetic to the sacrifices of these Families, but he urged them to remember the important work their loved ones completed in Iraq and Afghanistan, against an enemy who wants to destroy the American way of life. He said that without men and women like CW4 Engeman, who worked on a transition team training Iraqi security forces, security in Iraq would not be possible.

CW4 Engeman was serving as part of an embedded special transition team to train and advise Iraqi security forces while assigned to the 1/312th Battalion, 30th Enhanced Separate Brigade. He was killed May 14, 2006, when his vehicle hit a roadside bomb.

"I think it says a lot about his dad that Patrick chose to be in the Army too," said Lt. Gen. Odierno. "I think that says a lot about his leadership. I appreciate the great job he's done since he's been here as a platoon leader carrying on the tradition. We're very proud of him over here and I know he's living up to his dad's expectations."

Wearing a gold star pin and carrying her husband's hat, Donna Engeman, CW4 Engeman's wife of over 23 years, said her husband commissioned her son in the proudest moment in both of their lives, and that although sending him to the place his father died was difficult, she was proud of both of their commitment and duty.

The ceremony, she added, was comforting and important in the process of moving forward.

"I think this is a great thing and I am so pleased and so happy, grateful, to the Army for doing this for us," she said. "One of the things that you worry about as a widow, is, 'I'm going to lose my Army Family.' John was in the military for 28 years. In a sense, we have no other Family. And the thought of losing that was so frightening. The dynamics of the relationship have changed a little bit, but things like this, remind me that my Army Family is still here, and I'm grateful for that."(5)

[Event honors children of fallen](#)

August 25, 2011 By Dustin Senger (Fort Carson)



FORT CARSON, Colo. -- Col. Robert F. McLaughlin, garrison commander, walks with Joshua Blackwell, 4, during a Survivor Outreach Services recognition ceremony Monday. Joshua received a gold medal of remembrance for the loss of his father, Spc. Justin Blackwell, who died in August 2007 of wounds from a mortar attack in Iraq.

FORT CARSON, Colo. -- Dozens of children, representing the loss of a parent in military service, gathered in a garden near the Rocky Mountain Front Range Monday, where Army officers shook their hands and presented medals.

The summer morning marked the first medal of remembrance ceremony at Fort Carson, according to Army officials. The presentation culminated a recognition ceremony outside the Fallen Heroes Family Center, which opened last fall. Army leaders explained expanding support by the facility's Survivor Outreach Services.

The Fort Carson medals were inspired by the Gold Medal of Remembrance for the Sons and Daughters of Our Fallen Act of 2011. Introduced in May, the legislation grants a national "Gold Medal of Remembrance" to the children of each service member who dies as a result of wounds, injuries or illnesses -- retroactive to 9/11.

"We're all united in honoring our fallen heroes and caring for their Families, and especially for our kids," said Col. Robert F. McLaughlin, garrison commander, standing at a podium near a table holding almost 50 medals. Each case had the name of a child and a parent, a bond recently broken by combat, suicide and other incidences.

"For the Families of the fallen, on this day, we pay tribute to them and their fallen loved one,"

said McLaughlin. "Because in the end, it's really all about them. They are our future."

Next to the awards, a shaded bleacher of children exhibited a mix of emotions. One-by-one, they met Brig. Gen. James H. Doty, acting senior commander, 4th Infantry Division and Fort Carson.

"I told him he was going to receive a medal for his daddy, since he's unable to be here," said Ariana Garza, mother of Christian Hernandez, 5. The child acted enthusiastic about adding the decoration to his father's collection of medals, she said. His father, Staff Sgt. Juan Hernandez, died of suicide in October 2009.

"It's going to help give him comfort," said Garza, suggesting the ceremony would remind Christian that other children have also lost a parent.

Morgan Aschan, 11, was the first to receive a medal, followed by Wyatt Aschan, 14. Wyatt said the medal would embody his favorite memories of his father, Maj. Shawn Aschan. The Soldier drowned last month while stationed at Fort Belvoir, Va. The Family had been preparing for a move to Colorado Springs.

"I felt sad," said Wyatt, recalling the moment the Army general placed the medal over his shoulders. "I was starting to realize he's gone and I won't see him again." Despite the realization, Wyatt said the ceremony will help him heal from the loss of his father.

Joshua Blackwell, 4, dressed in an Army camouflage uniform, turned to the crowd of observers, filled his chest with air and opened his arms, a gesture that drew audience attention to his new medal.

"(The ceremony) reminds everyone that these men were not just Soldiers, they have Families, too. They are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, moms and dads," said Joshua's mother, Allyson Wyatt, widow of Spc. Justin Blackwell. The Soldier died in August 2007 of wounds from a mortar attack in Iraq.

"It's nice to have somewhere to go ... where people know what you're going through," said Chantel Aschan, widow of Shawn Aschan, describing the Fallen Heroes Family Center at Fort Carson. "The people here have been unbelievable ... amazing. They don't want you to worry about anything." (6)

[Soldier's son given gold medal](#)

By Amanda Kim Stairrett The Killeen Daily Herald | Updated Aug 16, 2012



Herald/Steven Doll - Amanda Davis, wife of Sgt. Robert Davis who was killed in Afghanistan, receives a hug from Col. Kent Savre, the 36th Engineer Brigade's commander, after Brayden Davis is awarded the Gold Star of Remembrance on Wednesday afternoon at the Shilo Inn in Killeen.

The family of an Army engineer killed in action was honored Wednesday in Killeen.

Sgt. Robert Davis of the 864th Engineer Combat Battalion, 555th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Fort Lewis, Wash., was killed Aug. 18, 2005, when a roadside bomb detonated under the Humvee he was driving in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Davis served as Col. Kent Savre's driver when he commanded the battalion during a previous deployment to Iraq. Savre now commands Fort Hood's 36th Engineer Brigade.

Davis and Savre grew close during their time at Fort Lewis and in Iraq, and they maintained contact with Davis, his wife, Amanda, and their son, Brayden.

The colonel and Brig. Gen. Bryan Watson, commandant of the U.S. Army Engineer School, presented Brayden with the Presidential Gold Medal of Remembrance. The sergeant died when Brayden was 3 months old.

The medal, issued by the White House Commission on Remembrance, recognizes and honors children who lost parents who died in combat or after returning from combat in the Middle East and Afghanistan, according to information from the commission.

Children from 35 families were awarded the medal during an August ceremony at Fort Hood.

"We know it's not just soldiers who serve and sacrifice for our nation," Savre said during the presentation.

He said later that hearing news about the death of his former soldier and friend was one of the most crushing days of his life. (7)

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2. White House Commission of Remembrance web site 2008
<http://webarchive.library.unt.edu/eot2008/20080916070040/http://www.remember.gov/>

3. "Gold Medal of Remembrance, Children of Fallen Troops honored; Award shows nation's support" By Sean Lengell, This article appeared in The Washington Times on October 30, 2007

4. "Children of Fallen Troops Honored at Remembrance Ceremonies" By Gerry J. Gilmore and John J. Kruzal, American Forces Press Service, WASHINGTON, Oct. 30, 2007

5. Army News Service, Oct. 29, 2007 "The Army honored the children of fallen-hero Chief Warrant Officer 4 John W. Engeman"

6. **"Event honors children of fallen"** August 25, 2011 By Dustin Senger (Fort Carson)

7. "Soldier's son given gold medal" By Amanda Kim Stairrett The Killeen Daily Herald | Updated Aug 16, 2012