



**Bridge  
Authority**

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**THE NEW YORK STATE BRIDGE AUTHORITY CEREMONIALLY DESIGNATES THE BEAR MOUNTAIN BRIDGE AS THE PURPLE HEART VETERANS MEMORIAL BEAR MOUNTAIN BRIDGE**

**Fort Montgomery, NY** – The New York State Bridge Authority today unveiled the sign designating the Bear Mountain Bridge as the Purple Heart Veterans Memorial Bear Mountain Bridge to honor Purple Heart recipients. The ceremonial designation comes after Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the bill S.8246/A.8766A sponsored by Senator Bill Larkin and Assembly Member Sandy Galef on October 2, 2018. This ceremonial designation of the Bear Mountain Bridge celebrates America’s heroes who have given so much, for many being the ultimate sacrifice. The designation also recognizes the rich history the Hudson Valley holds for America’s oldest military decoration, which traces its lineage to the Badge of Military Merit established by Commander-in-Chief George Washington while he was at his headquarters in Newburgh in 1782.

“We are honored to designate the Bear Mountain Bridge as the Purple Heart Veterans Memorial Bear Mountain Bridge,” **New York State Bridge Authority Executive Director Joseph Ruggiero** said. “Members of the traveling public will be now able to reflect on the sacrifices given by these brave men and women who served in our nation’s armed forces. With this dedication, we show eternal gratitude to these selfless individuals who embody our best values and traditions.”

As the oldest bridge within the jurisdiction of the New York State Bridge Authority, it is fitting to give the Bear Mountain Bridge this honored designation as it is rich with history of its own. The Bear Mountain Bridge was the first vehicular river crossing built between New York City and Albany. At the time the bridge was built, it was also the longest suspension bridge in the world and the first suspended bridge to have a concrete deck. The project of building the Bear Mountain Bridge marked the beginning of a golden age of long span bridge building along the Hudson River and throughout the New York metropolitan area. The success of the inventive methods used broke new ground and paved the way for the building of other suspension bridges such as the George Washington Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge.

“We thank Governor Cuomo for today’s ceremony to dedicate the Bear Mountain Bridge to service members who have been awarded the Purple Heart,” said **Major General Ray Shields**, Adjutant General of the State of New York and Commander of the New York National Guard. “Today is a great opportunity to remember their sacrifice and dedication to our nation. It is equally fitting that the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor is located nearby in New Windsor, NY. It’s my honor to represent all the service members of the NY Army and Air National Guard who have been awarded the Purple Heart over the years.”

**New York State Division of Veterans Affairs Executive Deputy Director Joel Evans** said “As a Veteran and the relative of a Purple Heart recipient, and an advocate for New York’s Veterans and their families, I am honored to take part in the designation of the Purple Heart Veteran’s Memorial Bear Mountain Bridge. In the spirit of Veterans Day, this designation honors those who have served and sacrificed for us so that we may all have the opportunity to access and enjoy the natural beauty of New York.”

"I thank Governor Cuomo and our State Legislature for supporting this legislation and honoring the nearly 2 million Purple Heart recipients across our great nation," said **State Senator Bill Larkin**. "It is important that we never lose sight of the sacrifice they and their families have made for our state and our country. The Hudson Valley is rich with military history. It is the home of West Point; it is the home of the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor and George Washington's Headquarters. Now, we can call it home to the Purple Heart Veterans Memorial Bridge."

"It is so special that on this Veterans' Day weekend we are honoring our veterans by designating the Bear Mountain Bridge as the Purple Heart Veterans Memorial Bridge. This is an east/ west bridge that connects Camp Smith to West Point and the National Purple Heart Hall of Honors. As motorists and pedestrians cross the bridge they will be forever reminded of the sacrifices that have been made by our military over the years and into the future. Thank you to all our veterans and their outstanding service to our state and nation," stated **Assemblywoman Sandy Galef**.

"Let the Purple Heart Veterans Memorial Bear Mountain Bridge stand as a reminder to all who cross it that freedom is not free," said **Military of the Purple Heart Department of New York Commander William Nazario**. "To all, be it young or old who cross the bridge, let it serve as an instrument of learning of the sacrifices and blood shed by many in protecting our freedoms."

Since taking office, Governor Cuomo has made strengthening services for veterans, active service members and their families a top priority. From holding the State's first Summit on Veterans and Military Families, to launching a 'Strike Force' partnership with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to help alleviate the federal government's backlog of benefit claims, to enacting the nation's largest set-aside for service-disabled veteran-owned businesses, with more than 500 companies certified, the Governor has spearheaded a number of programs and reforms to support U.S. military service members across New York.

This year alone, New York State has:

- Obtained \$52 million of tax-free federal benefits for veterans and their families in 2018.
- Established the nation's first Discharge Upgrade Advisory Board to review applications from veterans seeking to upgrade their character of discharge.
- Launched the Justice For Heroes Initiative to provide five law schools awards of \$150,000 apiece (\$50,000 per year for three years) to implement or improve clinical legal programs that help veterans, service members, and their families bridge the justice gap.
- Issued more than 2,500 branch-of-service license plates since New York's Department of Motor Vehicles began offering plates customized for the recipient's branch of military service in November 2017.
- Passed legislation to waive the application fee for all original appointment Civil Service Exams for all honorably discharged veterans.
- Launched the State's first-ever set of financial awards for not-for-profit organizations providing peer-to-peer assistance for veterans and their family members.
- Provided \$500,000 in grant funding for the Veteran-to-Veteran mentor programs that are crucial to the continued success of Veterans Treatment Courts.

Photos of today's ceremony can be seen [here](#).

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