

# News and stories

## WWII Medal of Honor recipient Williams thanks legislators at Capitol

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Jake Zuckerman | [Charleston Gazette-Mail](#)

The last surviving Medal of Honor recipient from the Pacific Theater of World War II addressed both chambers of the West Virginia Legislature on Wednesday.

Hershel Woodrow “Woody” Williams stopped by the state Capitol to thank lawmakers for the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution 6, which supports the construction of a Gold Star Families Memorial Monument on the Capitol Complex.

Gold Star families are those who have lost service members to war.

Speaking from the House floor, the Quiet Dell native thanked the chamber for supporting the construction of such a monument. “This Legislature has approved now to put one on the grounds of this Capitol so that others visiting the Capitol and the veterans memorial from all over the country, not just West Virginia, will have an opportunity to pay respect and honor to those families,” he said. “Thank you, for what you have done. It shows you have a big heart.”

Williams said he started the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation because, while the United States has done a

solid job memorializing its veterans, it hasn't paid enough attention to the sacrifices of the families of soldiers, sailors and Marines who never made it home from war.

The foundation encourages the construction of monuments to honor Gold Star families.

"We've done a pretty good job with recognizing our veterans, with veterans' memorials, plaques and other means of identification, but we haven't done anything for the loved ones," Williams said. "Even in Washington, D.C., our nation's capital, I'm told there are 1,100 memorials and monuments in Washington, but not one, not one pays tribute or honor to the families who gave a loved one so we could stay free."

According to the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Williams was presented with the Medal of Honor while serving with the U.S. Marine Corps for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as demolition sergeant serving with the 21st Marines, 3rd Marine Division, in action against enemy Japanese forces on Iwo Jima, Volcano Islands, 23 February 1945."

Under the cover of only four riflemen, Williams spent four hours under heavy fire attacking enemy pillboxes with a flamethrower, at one point reaching the nozzle of the weapon into a pillbox before setting it aflame.