



The Congressional Medal of Honor Society

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society was chartered in 1958 by Congress to promote a bond between Recipients of the Medal of Honor, provide appropriate aid to those who are awarded the Medal along with their widows and children, to help protect and preserve the dignity, honor and name of the Medal, to inspire and stimulate youth to become good citizens, and to foster and promote patriotism. The Society's role has never included nominating, selecting, or awarding the Medal of Honor.

Today, the Society continues to carry out these missions through programs that are dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Medal of Honor and its Recipients, inspiring and educating Americans and promoting the values associated with the Medal: courage, commitment, integrity, sacrifice, citizenship and patriotism. They do this through the Society's proprietary programs:

- Recipients' Medal of Honor Museum
- Archives and collections
- Valor Outreach Program
- Medal of Honor Character Development Program
- Citizen Honors Awards for Valor and Service

The Society also continues to provide bonding opportunities for Recipients through communications to members, annual conventions and other events. The Society supports them by making travel arrangements and advocating for their healthcare needs.

The membership of the Society and its board of directors is composed solely of Medal of Honor Recipients. It is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that does not receive funding from any government agencies. Instead, relies on private donations to operate.

The Society maintains an office and the Recipients' Medal of Honor Museum at Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, on board the USS Yorktown. As part of Public Law 106-83, the Medal of the Honor Memorial Act, the Museum was designated as one of three national Medal of Honor sites.

About the Medal of Honor

The Medal of Honor is the highest award presented to American military members who have distinguished themselves by acts of valor in combat.

Criteria to award the Medal has changed since it was created in 1861 and first awarded during the Civil War. Today, a valorous act must happen during conflict and distinguish a service member “conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty.”

All recommendations for the Medal are investigated and must be approved by the full chain-of-command up to the U.S. President as the Commander-in-Chief. Recommendations to award the Medal of Honor must be made within three years of the valorous act and the Medal must be presented within five years. Any submission made outside this timeline must receive a waiver from Congress to proceed.

There are three designs of the Medal of Honor, one each for the Army, Navy and Air Force. The Marine Corps and Coast Guard receive the Navy design.



Board of Directors

Congressional Medal of Honor Society

Leroy Petry (President)

Leroy Petry was awarded the Medal of Honor for his service in the U.S. Army during the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan. Since his return from the war, he has championed Veterans' mental health and wellbeing by addressing topics such as suicide prevention. Recipient Petry has also been involved in many outreach initiatives for the Congressional Medal of Honor Society and has inspired others with his stories of service.

James McCloughan (Vice President)

James McCloughan was awarded the Medal of Honor in 2017 for his service as a combat medic during the Vietnam War. Since then, he has given much of his time to help further the mission of the Society, recently completing a Living History Video and participating in a webinar as part of our Character Development Program

Ryan Pitts (Secretary)

Ryan Pitts was awarded the Medal of Honor for his service in the U.S. Army during the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan. His courage and steadfast devotion to his unit and the ability to fight while seriously wounded prevented the enemy from seizing fallen American soldiers. Recipient Pitts has shared his story with students across America through our Character Development Program.

Kyle J. White (Treasurer)

Kyle White received the Medal of Honor in 2014 for his service as a radio telephone operator during the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan. Recipient White continues to champion the Medal of Honor through the Congressional Medal of Honor Society's Veterans Outreach Program and Character Development Program. In 2021, he participated in "The Invisible Wounds of War" Webinar co-hosted by the Society and the Fisher House Foundation. He is an ambassador for Cohen Veterans Network.

Drew Dix (Immediate Past President)

Drew Dix was awarded the Medal of Honor for his service in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. His actions led to the rescue of many people. Recipient Dix recently served as our President and has consistently shared the values of the Medal of Honor with others. He served as the President of the Society's Board of Directors from 2017-2021.

Matthew Williams (First Regional Vice President)

Master Sgt. Matthew Williams was presented the Medal of Honor in 2019 for his service during the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan. Through his actions, he ensured the survival of four critically wounded soldiers. He has shared his story of valor through our Character Development Program and recently spoke at Wells Fargo for their Veterans' Connection Employee Resource Network.

Michael Thornton (Second Regional Vice President)

Michael Thornton was awarded the Medal of Honor for his service in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. Through his extraordinary courage, he was directly responsible for saving the life of his superior officer. Recently, he was part of a group of Recipients that talked to incoming freshmen at The Citadel Success Institute about courage and character.

Harold Fritz (Third Regional Vice President)

Harold Fritz was presented the Medal of Honor in 1971 for his service as a platoon leader during the Vietnam War. Recipient Fritz refused medical aid until all his wounded comrades had been treated and evacuated. He has continued to serve the Congressional Medal of Honor Society through Character Development Program initiatives.

William Swenson (Fourth Regional Vice President)

Lt. Col. William Swenson was awarded the Medal of Honor for his service in the U.S. Army during the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan. His exceptional leadership against the enemy rallied his teammates and ultimately disrupted the enemy's assault. Recipient Swenson is very involved in all of our events and has shared his story of service with communities across the United States.



Preservation, Education, Outreach and Support Programs

Archives and Preservation Programs

- Medal of Honor Museum, located at Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum, Mount Pleasant, SC
- Medal of Honor Archives & Library, co-located with the Medal of Honor Museum, serves as the memory and research center for the Medal of Honor and its Recipients.
- Living History Project – records oral histories of the Medal of Honor Recipients for future generations.

Valor Outreach Program

Medal of Honor Recipients continue to serve by connecting with a variety of groups. Through in-person and virtual events, Recipients share their unique insights on character, leadership, patriotism, integrity, resiliency, and adjustment to civilian life. They offer their personal experiences and unique perspectives to engage, motivate and inspire.

Medal of Honor Character Development Program

The Medal of Honor Character Development Program is a free resource that teaches courage, commitment, integrity, sacrifice, citizenship and patriotism to students through lessons developed by teachers for teachers. Both the elementary and secondary resources of the program teach students to recognize and exemplify these values, making them useful as Social Emotional Learning resource, a classroom management system, or as a tool to create a positive and healthy school culture. These character education lessons feature extraordinary military and civilian stories, providing students with concrete examples by which to live.

Citizen Honors Awards for Valor and Service

Since 2007, the Congressional Medal of Honor Society has selected U.S. citizens and organizations to receive Citizen Honors Awards each year. There is one organizational award category for community service and five awards for individual service and valor. The Awards are one of the numerous ways the Society fulfills its mission to promote the values embodied by the Medal: courage, sacrifice, integrity, commitment, patriotism, and citizenship. A panel assembled by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society considers all nominations and selects national finalists. Then, a second panel made up exclusively of Medal of Honor Recipients—Americans whose actions have truly defined the words “courage” and “selfless service”—selects individuals and organizations from those finalists to receive the Citizen Honors Awards.

Support Programs for Medal of Honor Recipients

- Healthcare advice and advocacy Program provides a dedicated, on-call resource to help Recipients and their families with health, medical, insurance, benefit, and life-care planning issues and questions.
- Travel and logistics coordination provides an on-call resource to help Recipients with travel and needs to facilitate outreach efforts.
- Educational assistance for Medal of Honor Recipients’ children and scholarships for veterans.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it "Medal of Honor" or "Congressional Medal of Honor"?

The name of the Medal is simply "Medal of Honor" — the word "Congressional" is sometimes mistakenly used because the Medal was created by Congress; however, the Medal is purely a military award. The Congressional Medal of Honor Society was chartered by Congress, which is why the word Congressional precedes the Society's name.

Why are they called "recipients" and not "winners?"

The living Recipients do not view the Medal of Honor as something that was won, like one might win a race. They view the Medal as something that was bestowed upon them to carry as a symbol of the sacrifices of all who have served. In the past, "Winner" might have been used, but out of respect for those who currently wear the Medal, please use the term "Recipient."

Are the Unknown Soldiers interred at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington Medal of Honor Recipients?

Yes. All four of the U.S. Unknown Soldiers have been presented a Medal of Honor in recognition of their sacrifice and the sacrifices of all who serve the country.

Are most Medals of Honor awarded posthumously?

No. Overall, only 18.5% of Medals of Honor have been awarded posthumously.

What is the Congressional Gold Medal?

This award is Congress' highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions by individuals, groups, or institutions. It can be awarded for military, cultural, scientific, or civic actions and to anyone Congress deems worthy. It is not connected to the Medal of Honor.

What is the Presidential Medal of Freedom?

Awarded since 1963, this is bestowed by the President of the United States to recognize people who have made "an especially meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors." It is not connected to the Medal of Honor.

Must you have to be a U.S. citizen to receive the Medal of Honor?

No. You do not have to be a citizen, but you do have to serve in the U.S. military. In addition, there have been at least 764 foreign-born Recipients, and not all of them chose to become citizens. Ireland and Germany are the most common non-U.S. birth locations.

Has anyone serving in a foreign country's military received the Medal of Honor?

Yes. Following World War I, the U.S. Congress passed special legislation allowing the Medal of Honor to be presented to the Unknown Soldiers of some of the U.S.'s allies from that war. Thus the Unknown Soldiers of Belgium, France, Great Britain, Italy, and Rumania [Romania] all are listed as Recipients of the Medal of Honor. This is the only time members of a foreign country's military have been awarded the Medal of Honor.

How is a Recipient accredited to a specific state?

A Recipient is accredited to the state from which they entered the military service.

Which U.S. states have the most Recipients accredited to them?

New York (676), Pennsylvania (380), Massachusetts (264), Ohio (253), and Illinois (208).

How many Medals of Honor have been awarded for each military service branch?

Army (2,452), Navy (749), Marine Corps (300), Air Force (19), Coast Guard (1).

Do Medal of Honor Recipients receive special benefits from the government?

Yes. The Recipients receive a special monthly pension, travel on military aircraft on space-available basis, have access to base commissaries, and are guaranteed burial at Arlington National Cemetery and admittance for their children to the military service academies. Some states offer special license plates and tax benefits.

The Medal of Honor Foundation

The Medal of Honor Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit established in 1999 to support and advance the mission of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. The Foundation's board of directors is composed of both Medal of Honor Recipients and non-Recipients.

The Society and Foundation rely solely on private philanthropy – gifts from individuals, corporations, and foundations – and receive no government funding. The Foundation is a 4-Star Rated Charity as rated by Charity Navigator.

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society is the only organization chartered by Congress to support Recipients. Although the Medal of Honor traces its origins back to 1861, it wasn't until 1958 that Congress and President Eisenhower chartered a specific organization to address the work and well-being of Recipients.

Today the Society creates a bond between Recipients while keeping their memories alive, protecting the legacy of the Medal, and promoting the values and ideals upon which our country was founded. It remains the only group chartered by Congress to take on such great responsibilities.

Through the Society, Recipients remain as deeply committed to serving our country in peace as they did in war.

