

# Oregon City's Tyrone Woods to receive Congressional Gold Medal

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## **Senate finally passes bill to posthumously award Congressional Gold Medal to four Americans who died in the 2012 terrorist attack on the U.S. consulate.**

September marked the 10th anniversary of the Battle of Benghazi, when four Americans, including Oregon City's own Tyrone S. Woods, defended civilians at a U.S. consulate and lost their lives during a horrific armed terrorist attack.

"So it is fitting that with over eight years devoted to pursuing the passage of legislation to honor these courageous men, the legislation has passed through both chambers," said Woods' mother, Cheryl Croft Bennett, a resident of Oregon City since 1986.

In July, by unanimous voice vote, the U.S. House of Representatives approved the legislation and on Dec. 12, the U.S. Senate also approved the bipartisan and bicameral legislation that will posthumously award the Congressional Gold Medal to Woods, Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, Sean P. Smith and Glen A. Doherty.

Congressional Gold Medals are the highest award that Congress can bestow on American civilians for exemplary contributions to the nation.

Since 2010, Woods, a U.S. Navy veteran and a retired SEAL team member, was a CIA civilian contractor who worked protecting high-level government officials and the interests of the United States in foreign countries. Prior to his military service, he graduated from Oregon City High School, where he was a state wrestling champion.

"During an armed terrorist attack, these four patriots selflessly laid down their lives as they defended our U.S. consulate, classified CIA annex and personnel," Bennett said.

Bennett said she will be "forever appreciative" for the support of all the congressional co-sponsors. "The sacrifice of the four Americans in defense of their fellow citizens," Bennett said, "will stand in history as a compelling testimonial to the true meaning of courage and loyalty."

"Tyrone would never have asked for this recognition, but it is important to the families, as well as for many thousands of Americans, that these men finally receive the tribute they so genuinely deserve," Bennett said.

Woods' honor took eight years and four attempts through Congress before finally obtaining the necessary two-thirds support by both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Oregon Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden were instrumental in lobbying members of their chamber to honor Woods with the most prestigious award that Congress can bestow. Since 1776 when the first Congressional Gold Medal was awarded to President George Washington, a total of 181 have been given.

The bill now heads to the president's desk for signature. After the Congressional Gold Medal is designed and cast, which will take approximately 12-18 months, a ceremony will be held at the Capitol to present the medals to the families.

"These brave patriots laid down their lives in an act of heroism that should be recognized and honored for years to come," Merkley said. "I am proud to join my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to properly honor these heroes, their service and their sacrifice."

Woods' courage and legendary history as a 20-year veteran U.S. Navy SEAL and a CIA protective officer was officially honored by the city of Oregon City with a new 9.2 acre park that was dedicated in May 2021.

With a unanimous vote of the Oregon Legislature in 2013, ODOT was directed to erect and maintain a "Fallen Hero Memorial Highway" sign for Woods on Highway 213. The sign was installed soon after a September 2014 ceremony.

In 2015, a nonprofit organization, The Tyrone Snowden Woods Wrestling Foundation, was created to honor Woods' heroic legacy in service to his country, his achievement as an OSAA champion wrestler, and to provide financial assistance to individual wrestlers and wrestling programs. The foundation has donated over \$84,000 to youth wrestlers and programs since 2016.

Oregon City now has three recognized national heroes. Sgt. Waldo Emerson Caufield, who in 1918 was killed in action during WWI, was awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French government posthumously.

U.S. Army Specialist Larry Dahl threw himself on a grenade that landed in a gun truck during combat in Vietnam in 1971. Dahl's action cost him his life, but saved his three crewmates and earned him the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award.

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