

**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA
MAY 7 – 8, 2014**

Resolution No. 22: Gold Star and Next of Kin of Deceased Personnel Lapel Buttons
Origin: National Security Commission
Submitted by: Internal Affairs Commission

WHEREAS, Historically, mothers of fallen servicemembers began calling themselves "Gold Star Mothers" during the First World War and today they are known as American Gold Star Mothers, Inc, and were issued a federal charter by Congress in 1984; and

WHEREAS, Since 1936, each year on Gold Star Mother's Day, the United States president calls on all Americans to display the nation's flag and hold appropriate meetings to publicly express their love, sorrow, and reverence towards Gold Star Mothers and their families with government buildings required to display the flag; and

WHEREAS, Since the Gold Star Mothers, Inc's founding in 1929, The American Legion has had a long history of support with several resolutions passed at National Conventions and National Executive Committee meetings; and

WHEREAS, The Gold Star Lapel Button (See Attachment A) was established by Act of Congress (PL 80-306) on August 1, 1947 for presentation to families of servicemembers providing an appropriate means to identify widows, widowers, children, parents and brothers and sisters of members of the Armed Forces of the United States who lost their lives in the defense of democracy and freedom during World Wars I and II, and any subsequent hostilities in which the United States would become engaged; and

WHEREAS, The unique design of the button incorporates the symbols that indicates the families loss, with the border in gold and surrounded by gold laurel leaves signifying valor and a purple field signifying the families grief for mourning; and

WHEREAS, The Army approved in 1977 the issue of the Next of Kin of Deceased Personnel Lapel Button which honors those who lost their lives while serving on active duty, not in a combat zone, or while assigned in a Reserve or National Guard unit in a drill status; and

WHEREAS, The Next of Kin Button has since been adopted, through the Department of Defense, in all Armed Services; and

WHEREAS, The Next of Kin Button (See Attachment A) consists of a gold star within a circle surrounded by sprigs of oak that represent the branches of the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, There has been some confusion surrounding the significance of the Next of Kin lapel buttons given to surviving family members for loved ones who died while serving honorably in the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, In our nation's long military history there is a distinct precedence for special recognition going to those who served in a combat zone; and

WHEREAS, The issuance of the Purple Heart, first created by George Washington in 1782, was to reward troops for unusual gallantry, extraordinary fidelity and essential service in combat; and

WHEREAS, The modern awarding of the Purple Heart was reestablished in War Department Circular No. 6 dated February 22, 1932, which states that the medal be awarded to anyone serving in the Army who had received combat-related injuries; and

WHEREAS, The Nation has attached a special honor to our brave and dedicated warriors who give their life defending the freedom of this great country in combat and this special honor should continue to be supported; and

WHEREAS, There may be differences in presentations between the branches of service but there is only one law that governs the procurement, awarding, and wearing of the buttons; and

WHEREAS, The military services have started an awareness campaign to alert the public of the honor and distinction as to the meaning and identification of the two lapel buttons by recent radio and television spots; and

WHEREAS, This resolution has been reviewed by the National Security Commission and with concurrence from the Internal Affairs Commission, is recommended to the National Executive Committee for favorable action; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 7-8, 2014, That The American Legion does support the criteria established for the issuance of the Gold Star Lapel Button to family members of servicemembers who were killed or died as result of action in designated conflict areas with the periods of eligibility established by Department of Defense; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Next of Kin of Deceased Personnel Lapel Button be issued to family members of servicemembers who die while serving on active duty, not in a combat zone, or while assigned to a Reserve or National Guard unit in a drill status; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all departments and posts are reminded even with the difference in criteria for the two lapel buttons that when dealing with family members who are grieving the loss of a family member, who served and died in the line of duty for their Nation, that The American Legion services are available to loved ones regardless of relationship, geography, or manner of death and we make no distinction because their loved ones took the oath of enlistment and served honorably until death to this Great Nation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion incorporate awareness of the significance of the Gold Star and the Next of Kin Deceased Personnel Lapel buttons in all publicity before and during their conduct of Gold Star Banner Ceremonies to include information in print publications and on websites.

ABOUT THE PINS

In 1947, Congress approved the use of the Gold Star Lapel Button as a way to recognize the families of service members who lose their lives while engaged in action against an enemy of the United States. In 1977, the Army approved issue of the Lapel Button for the Next of Kin of Deceased Personnel to honor those who lose their lives while serving on active duty or while assigned in a Reserve or National Guard unit in a drill status. Issue of the button is retroactive to 29 March 1973."

These small lapel buttons, or pins, as they are commonly called, are normally presented to eligible family members prior to the military funeral service. Although they are less than an inch in size, they are packed with great meaning and emotion. They are not awards. They are symbols of honor. Here is how you can tell them apart.

GOLD STAR LAPEL BUTTON



This symbol consists of a gold star on a purple background, bordered in gold and surrounded by gold laurel leaves. It is designated for eligible survivors of service members who lose their lives during any armed hostilities in which the United States is engaged, dating back to World War I. This includes service members who lose their lives while deployed in support of military operations against the enemy or during an international terrorist attack.

NEXT OF KIN OF DECEASED PERSONNEL LAPEL BUTTON



This symbol consists of a gold star within a circle that commemorates his or her honorable service. The gold star is also surrounded by sprigs of oak that represent the branches of the Armed Forces. It is designated for eligible survivors of service members who lose their lives while serving honorably under circumstances not defined above. This includes service members who lose their lives while assigned to a Reserve or National Guard unit in a drill status. It is authorized for issue retroactive to March 29, 1973.

Who can wear the pin?

The family members entitled to receive and wear these symbols are the widow or widower; each child, stepchild, and child through adoption; each brother, half brother, sister, and half sister; and each of the parents (this includes mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, mother through adoption, father through adoption, and foster parents in loco parentis).