

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

November 22, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We, the members of the Michigan Congressional delegation, write today to request your support for a state funeral for the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient from World War II, United States Marine Corps Corporal “Woody” Hershel Woodrow Williams. This national recognition would distinguish the outstanding heroism of Williams and serve to recognize the 473 service members who were awarded the Medal of Honor for service during World War II, along with the 16 million Americans who faithfully served our nation, including many Michiganders, during that war.

613,543 Michiganders would answer the call to serve in the armed forces in the years following the attack on Pearl Harbor by military forces of the Empire of Japan and the subsequent Declaration of War on the United States by the European Axis powers. In the end, 10,263 Americans from Michigan made the ultimate sacrifice and a further 29,321 were wounded defending our nation against fascism and tyranny.<sup>1</sup>

Fifteen residents of Michigan were awarded the Medal of Honor for their heroic and selfless acts during the Second World War. They are<sup>2</sup>:

First Lieutenant George Ham Cannon, U.S. Marine Corps

Colonel Demas Thurlow “Nick” Craw, U.S. Army Air Corps

Staff Sergeant Jesse Ray Drowley, U.S. Army

Ensign Francis Charles Flaherty, U.S. Naval Reserve

Boatswain’s Mate Second Class Owen Francis Patrick Hammerberg, U.S. Navy

Sergeant Oscar Godfrey Johnson Jr., U.S. Army

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<sup>1</sup> Fritz Klug, *Michigan Honors: 10 facts about Michigan during World War 2*, MLive (January 20, 2019), [https://www.mlive.com/lansing-news/2014/05/michigan\\_honors\\_10\\_facts\\_about.html#:~:text=Who%20served%3A%20During%20World%20War,or%204.7%20percent%20were%20injured..](https://www.mlive.com/lansing-news/2014/05/michigan_honors_10_facts_about.html#:~:text=Who%20served%3A%20During%20World%20War,or%204.7%20percent%20were%20injured..)

<sup>2</sup> Congressional Medal of Honor Society, The Recipients, accessed November 2, 2021, [https://www.cmohs.org/recipients/page/1?conflicts\[\]=world-war-ii&state\\_accredited\\_to\[\]=24](https://www.cmohs.org/recipients/page/1?conflicts[]=world-war-ii&state_accredited_to[]=24).

Pharmacist's Mate First Class Francis J. Pierce, U.S. Navy

Major John Carleton Sjogren, U.S. Army

Staff Sergeant Maynard Harrison Smith Sr., U.S. Army Air Corps

Private First Class William H. Thomas, U.S. Army

First Lieutenant Charles Leroy Thomas, U.S. Army

Private First Class Dirk John Cornelius Vlug, U.S. Army

Private First Class Walter C. Wetzel, U.S. Army

Second Lieutenant Thomas W. Wigle, U.S. Army

Second Lieutenant Raymond Zussman, U.S. Army

Of the 473 Medals awarded during World War II, 266 were awarded posthumously, and of the 198 recipients who survived to be awarded the honor, at present, Corporal Williams is the only surviving recipient.

As this exceptional American continues to advance in age, we urge you to take decisive action to honor his actions and those of all World War II Medal of Honor recipients, and pay tribute to all those who defended our nation and the world against fascism. As members of the Michigan Congressional delegation, we respectfully request that you declare a non-presidential state funeral so our nation may honor the heroism, service, and sacrifice of Corporal Williams and all those who served during World War II.

Sincerely,



RASHIDA TLAIB  
Member of Congress

JACK BERGMAN  
Member of Congress

BILL HUIZENGA  
Member of Congress

DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress

DANIEL T. KILDEE  
Member of Congress

BRENDA L. LAWRENCE  
Member of Congress

JOHN R. MOOLENAAR  
Member of Congress

ANDY LEVIN  
Member of Congress

ELISSA SLOTKIN  
Member of Congress

LISA MCCLAIN  
Member of Congress

HALEY STEVENS  
Member of Congress

PETER MEIJER  
Member of Congress

FRED UPTON  
Member of Congress

TIM WALBERG  
Member of Congress