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SD BRIDGES TO BE DEDICATED IN HONOR OF SIX WORLD WAR II VETERANS

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will host a regional State Bridge Dedication Ceremony to honor six World War II veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving their nation.

The ceremony will be on Tuesday, November 11, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. (CT) at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance in Sioux Falls (1600 W. Russell St.).

These dedications are part of the Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Program, which was launched during the Noem-Rhoden Administration and expanded under Governor Rhoden. In partnership with the South Dakota Departments of Military, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs, this program creates visible and enduring tributes that connect communities to their history and remind future generations of the cost of freedom.

"The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is excited to recognize more of our fallen this year than we have in past years," said Aaron Pollard, Deputy Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. We will accomplish this by adding a regional event where multiple South Dakotans will be recognized. While this event will have a different look from other Fallen Hero Bridge Dedications, we are committed to recognizing the sacrifices made by each individual.

The US HWY-14 bridge, two miles east of DeSmet, will be dedicated as the WT2 Porter L. Rich Bridge. Water Tender Second Class Rich served in the U.S. Navy and was killed in action on December 7, 1941, while serving on the USS Oklahoma, which was anchored at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

The SD HWY-38 bridge over the East Fork Vermillion River, east of Montrose, will be dedicated as the MM2 Milton L. Muller Bridge. Machinist's Mate Second Class Muller served in the U.S. Navy and was killed in action on December 25, 1943, while serving on the USS Leary in the Atlantic.

The SD HWY-11 bridge over Split Rock Creek, two miles north of Brandon, will be dedicated as the CPL Harvey H. Henle Bridge. Corporal Henle served in the U.S. Army and was killed in action on June 16, 1944, just days following D-Day in Normandy, France.

The SD HWY-42 bridge over the James River, eight miles east of Ethan, will be dedicated as the SGT Alvin W. Erpenbach Bridge. Sergeant Erpenbach served in the U.S. Army and was killed in action on September 7, 1944, while defending a bridge in Italy.

The SD HWY-19 bridge over the West Fork Vermillion River, north of Parker, will be dedicated as the PVT Marvin L. Gunderson Bridge. Private Gunderson served in the U.S. Army and was killed in action on April 3, 1945, in Okinawa, Japan.

The SD HWY-19 bridge over the Vermillion River, 11 miles north of Volin, will be dedicated as the PFC Leland L. Nielson Bridge. Private First Class Nielson served in the U.S. Army and was killed in action on June 29, 1945, in Mindanao, Philippines.

“By holding this regional event, we can name more bridges, which will put a greater spotlight on this important program, continued Pollard.