



# STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

## OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

---

Daniel J. McKee **Governor**  
Kasim J. Yarn **Director**

March 11, 2026

The Honorable Walter S. Felag Jr.  
Chair, Senate Committee on Special Legislation and Veterans' Affairs  
State House  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: S2177 - AN ACT RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE -- DECORATIONS**

Dear Chair Felag:

I submit this letter for the record to express the Office of Veterans Services' support for S2177, which would establish the Rhode Island Orange Heart Medal and formally recognize Veterans whose service exposed them to toxic herbicides, burn pits, or other hazards like Agent Orange.

These Veterans served our country with honor and courage, often without knowing the long-term health consequences they would face as a result of that military service.

For decades, many Veterans affected by toxic exposure have suffered from serious illnesses that were misunderstood, or dismissed, leaving them without proper recognition or support. The Orange Heart Medal represents an important step in acknowledging these invisible wounds and affirming that injuries caused by toxic exposure are no less real or deserving of honor than those sustained on the battlefield.

By creating the Rhode Island Orange Heart Medal, our state has the opportunity to lead with compassion, accountability, and respect for Veterans and their families. This legislation would send a powerful message that Rhode Island recognizes the full cost of military service and is committed to honoring all who have borne it.

I respectfully urge you to support S2177 and stand with our Veterans. Thank you for your time, your ongoing partnership, and your unwavering commitment to Rhode Island's Veterans and military families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. J. Yarn", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kasim J. Yarn  
Director of Veterans Services

CC: The Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Special Legislation and Veterans' Affairs  
Kristen Silvia, Deputy Chief of Staff/Director of Legislation