

Date of Hearing: April 25, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Laura Friedman, Chair

ACR 151 (Berman) – As Introduced February 22, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Captain Matthew Patrick Manoukian Memorial Highway

**SUMMARY:** Designates a portion of State Route 280 between postmarker 10.741 and postmarker 14.844 in Santa Clara County as Captain Matthew Patrick Manoukian Memorial Highway.

**EXISTING LAW:** Assigns the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways. This includes the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown, but the measure requests that Caltrans determine the cost of appropriate signage consistent with requirements for the state highway system, and only erect the appropriate signage upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost.

**COMMENTS:** Captain Matthew Patrick Manoukian was a servant of the world who was rarely without his trademark smile, who always lead from the front, and who deeply loved his family, friends, and country. Manoukian was born on February 22, 1983, in the City of Seal Beach, California, as the oldest son of the Honorable Socrates Peter Manoukian and the Honorable Patricia Bamattre-Manoukian.

Manoukian grew up in the City of Los Altos Hills, California, and was a brother and best friend to Michael and Martin. When he was seven years old, Manoukian determined he would one day serve those in need by voluntarily joining the United States Marine Corps (Marine Corps). Manoukian attended and graduated from St. Nicholas Grammar School in the City of Los Altos Hills, California, as part of the class of 1997, St. Francis High School in the City of Mountain View, California, as part of the class of 2001, and later graduated from the University of Arizona in the City of Tucson, Arizona, as part of the class of 2005 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science and a minor in Sociology.

Manoukian never wavered from his childhood dream of joining the Marine Corps and he seriously deliberated enlisting immediately after the events of September 11, 2001, but he ultimately decided to complete his undergraduate studies and take time to address two significant medical issues that he later overcame.

In January of 2006, following graduation from the University of Arizona, Manoukian entered the Marine Corps Officer Candidate School in Quantico, Virginia, where, in March of 2006, he graduated and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, next graduating from The Basic School in October of 2006 and then from The Infantry Officers Course in December of 2006. In January of 2007, Manoukian reported to the 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment at Camp Pendleton where he served as a Rifle Platoon Commander. Manoukian organized a rigorous training program for his platoon and continuously demonstrated great dedication to his Marine.

While preparing for his first deployment from Camp Pendleton, Manoukian independently began a dedicated process studying the history and cultures of the Middle East and learned to speak

Arabic. In April of 2007, Manoukian deployed for his first tour of duty to the town of Anah, Al-Anbar Province, in Western Iraq where he served as a Mobile Assault Platoon Commander in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Over the course of his seven-month deployment, the Marines focused on bringing stability and security to the area. With the goal of helping the local populous establish a formal rule of law, Manoukian and his colleagues worked to create a local police force and to appoint an Iraqi Judge to the District Center.

As security increased and the rule of law was established, markets and bazaars opened, local medical providers started serving the community, and children went back to school. During this tour, Manoukian was injured by a roadside improvised explosive device and suffered a traumatic brain injury, however, in spite of this injury, Manoukian placed a tourniquet on the bleeding leg of another Marine, helping to save his fellow Marine's life.

In August of 2008, Manoukian deployed for his second tour to Al-Anbar Province, Waleed, Iraq where he served as his Military Transition Team's Operations Officer and Senior Tactical Advisor and was responsible for coordinating, planning, and training the Iraqi Department of Border Enforcement's Brigade Headquarters and staff. His team worked with local Iraqi authorities to secure the western border with Syria, a country where his paternal grandfather had lived for 15 years.

In February of 2009, Manoukian volunteered to attend the Assessment and Selection screening for the Marine Special Operations Command at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where he finished among the top tier of Marines who entered the program and graduated in February of 2010. On April 1, 2010, Manoukian was promoted to Captain, and in August of 2010, Manoukian deployed for his third tour to Helmand Province, Afghanistan, where he served as a Team Commander in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Manoukian and his team worked with the local leaders and the District Governor to establish a local police force and a judicial system, unify local village leadership with district level governance, and help improve security by mentoring, training, and developing the Afghan Security Guard Force. In May of 2012, Manoukian deployed for his fourth and final tour as the Team Commander for Marine Special Operations Team 8133 and was assigned to Village Stability Platform Puzeh in the Upper Sangin River Valley of the Helmand Province.

Manoukian and his team were charged with the responsibility of improving security in the Upper Sangin River Valley, training and mentoring Afghan Local Police, Afghan Uniformed Police, and one infantry battalion from the Afghan National Guard, and transitioning security to full Afghan control. In Puzeh, Manoukian learned to speak Pashtu, fasted during the religious holidays, and worked closely with the villagers, always showing great respect for the Afghan people and their culture as he and his team worked to help bring security, hope, and freedom to an area where these liberties were nonexistent.

While conducting village stability operations in Helmand Province on August 10, 2012, the Marine Tactical Operations Center came under automatic small arms fire from a rogue Afghan uniformed policeman attacking from inside the perimeter. After mortally wounding one Marine outside the entrance, the gunman unleashed a barrage of AK-47 fire that ripped through the plywood walls and partitions of the Tactical Operations Center, where he then burst through the door and engaged two Marines who had begun maneuvering out of the room.

From the far corner of the room, Manoukian drew his pistol and, in the face of near certain death, engaged the attacker while commanding his Marines to maneuver to safety. With one of the two Marines critically wounded, Manoukian courageously drew heavy fire upon himself and continued to engage the enemy until he fell mortally wounded from the overwhelming fire of the shooter. His heroic and selfless actions assisted in halting the gunman's assault and forcing him to withdraw, enabling his Marines to survive.

Because of his decisive and selfless actions, bold initiative, and complete dedication to duty, Manoukian reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service. On January 18, 2014, Captain Matthew Patrick Manoukian was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for his heroic actions of exposing himself to enemy fire, thereby allowing his comrades to escape and saving their lives. In addition to the Navy Cross, Captain Matthew Patrick Manoukian earned a Purple Heart with Gold Star, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Gold Star, Combat Action Ribbon with Gold Star, Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon with Bronze Star, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Two Bronze Stars, Iraq Campaign Medal with Two Bronze Stars, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with Three Bronze Stars, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medal, Naval Parachutist Badge, Rifle Expert Badge, and Pistol Expert Badge.

Captain Matthew Patrick Manoukian is survived by his father, mother, and two younger brothers.

*According to the author*, "The resolution commemorates the 10th anniversary of Captain Manoukian's ultimate sacrifice to our country and honors his legacy of unwavering bravery, courageous leadership and extraordinary heroism. The resolution would name the portion of State Route 280 in the Town of Los Altos Hills—Captain Manoukian's hometown—between postmarker 10.741 and postmarker 14.844 to honor and commemorate Captain Manoukian's service to his community and country."

*Committee Comments*: It is the intent of the Assembly Transportation Committee to use the Memorial Highway Naming process to honor deceased Californians who have made significant public service contributions and also to reflect the diversity of our state. Currently, most named highways in California are for fallen male public safety officers, who made the ultimate sacrifice, and for whom we are indebted. However, these names do not fully represent the wide range of types of public service contributions, as well as the gender and racial diversity of California's communities. The Assembly Transportation Committee is committed to working with the Department of Transportation in the upcoming year to improve the naming process to ensure greater equity and to better represent the diversity of California.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

None on file.

### **Opposition**

None on file.

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