



## For Immediate Release

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**Contact:** Eileen Corson

**Cell:** 614-357-7305

### Today Four Ohio World War II Veterans to be Awarded French Legion of Honor

COLUMBUS – Four Ohio veterans who helped liberate France during World War II will be awarded France's Medal of Knight of the Legion of Honor in a ceremony scheduled for **2 p.m. today in the Ohio Statehouse, State Reception Room**. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend.

**The medals will be presented by French Consul General for the Midwest States Vincent Floreani** and assisted by **Ohio Department of Veterans Services Director Chip Tansill**. Consul General Floreani will also present a brief history of the award.

The Legion of Honor was created by Napoleon in 1802, and is presented to "...those who have achieved remarkable deeds for France." People who have been named Knights of the French Legion of Honor include those in the military, government, industry and the arts.

The veterans being honored are:

- **Neal W. Burdette, 90, of Lancaster, Ohio.**

Mr. Burdette entered the Armed Forces in 1943 and served as an automatic rifleman in Company C 101<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiment, 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. He served overseas from September 1944 to January 1946, and participated in the campaigns of Rhineland, and Central Europe. Mr. Burdette is a recipient of the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon with two bronze stars, a Purple Heart for wounds he received on November 11, 1944 in France, Expert Infantry badge, Combat Infantry Badge, the Good Conduct Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the American Theater Ribbon, and Bronze Star Medal.

- **Bernard M. Eshelman, 91, of Columbus, Ohio.**

Mr. Eshelman entered the Armed Forces in 1943 and served as a Lineman Field 641 in Company I, 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Division. He served in England from April 7, 1944 until April 14, 1944, and in France from August 1944 until he left for Belgium in January 1945 eventually returning to the United States in September 1945. He was wounded France in August 1944 and Belgium in

January 1945. He participated in the campaigns of Normandy (D-Day invasion – Omaha Beach), Northern France, the Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe. Mr. Eshelman is a recipient of the Purple Heart Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon with five bronze stars, Combat Infantry Badge and the Good Conduct Medal.

- **Vernon C. Miller, 89, of Huber Heights, Ohio.**

Mr. Miller entered the Armed Forces in 1943 and served as a Boatswains Mate C-3 on board USS Cincinnati. He participated in the campaigns Normandy, and Southern France. He was awarded one battle star for service in the European African campaign. Mr. Miller was invited to attend the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of D-Day in Ste-Mere Eglise, France in June of 2015 and was awarded the Legion of Honor Medal.

- **George Zwahlen, 94, of Hopewell, Ohio.**

Mr. Zwahlen entered the Armed Forces in 1942 and served as a mortar NCO with Company C, 314<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 79<sup>th</sup> Division. He served in Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland and Central Europe. Mr. Zwahlen is a recipient of the Bronze Star Medal, and the Purple Heart Medal for wounds he received in France in December 1944, he also received the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon with four Bronze Stars, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the World War II Victory Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, Distinguished Unit Badge, and the American Campaign Medal.

U.S. veterans who participated in the liberation of France during World War II are eligible for the award of Knight of the Legion of Honor. For information, contact Pascale Furlong-Thome at the French Consulate in Chicago, at (312) 327-5220, or [pascale.furlong@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:pascale.furlong@diplomatie.gouv.fr).

Media needing more information, contact - Eileen Corson at 614-728-0235, Cell: 614-357-7305 or [Eileen.Corson@dvs.ohio.gov](mailto:Eileen.Corson@dvs.ohio.gov)