

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

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By: Rodríguez  
Veteran Affairs & Military Installations  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The Texas Legislative Medal of Honor was established to recognize gallant and intrepid service by a member of the state or federal military forces, and U.S. Army Private Marcelino Serna proved himself a deserving recipient of this prestigious honor with his heroic actions during World War I.

Born in Chihuahua, Mexico, in 1896, Mr. Serna came to the United States as a young man and spent time in Texas, Kansas, and Colorado; after the United States entered World War I in 1917, he enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 20, and after only three weeks of training, he was shipped overseas with the 355th Infantry, 89th Division; when his superior officers in France learned that he was not a U.S. citizen, they gave him the opportunity to return home, but Private Serna chose to stay and fight.

Private Serna quickly established himself as a remarkable soldier, and on at least two occasions, he demonstrated exceptional resourcefulness and courage; during an engagement near the French town of St. Mihiel, 12 members of his unit were hit by fire from an enemy machine gun, and Private Serna obtained permission from his lieutenant to scout out the gun emplacement on his own; moving through heavy fire, and surviving two rounds that were deflected by his helmet, he tossed four hand grenades into the machine gun nest, killing six of the enemy; he then took the eight survivors captive.

Shortly thereafter, during the Meuse-Argonne campaign, Private Serna embarked on a second lone scouting mission; he began by wounding a German sniper with a shot from 200 yards, then followed the injured man into a trench; firing and hurling grenades in all directions to make it seem as if he were part of a larger force, he shot three German soldiers immediately, then attacked an enemy dugout, felling 26 more and capturing 24; he single-handedly held the prisoners at gunpoint until other members of his unit arrived.

Private Serna continued to serve in combat until the end of the war, receiving a wound in each leg, and while he was recovering in a French hospital, he was presented with the Distinguished Service Cross from the American commander in France, General John J. Pershing; he also earned the World War I Victory Medal with five stars, the Victory Medal with three campaign bars, the St. Mihiel Medal, the Verdun Medal, and two Purple Hearts; he was further decorated by the governments of France, Italy, and the United Kingdom, receiving two French Croix de Guerre with Palm Medals, the French Medaille Militaire, the French Commemorative Medal, the British Medal of Honor, and the Italian Cross of Merit.

After returning to the United States, Mr. Serna became a U.S. citizen in 1924 and settled in El Paso, where he lived until his death in 1992; he was the most decorated Texas veteran of World War I, winning every major military award short of the Congressional Medal of Honor, and petitions have been put forth on several occasions to grant him that commendation as well.

Marcelino Serna's courageous battlefield actions during World War I have been recognized with a host of illustrious commendations, and it is indeed appropriate that he be honored with the highest military award granted by the state in which he made his home.

**RESOLVED**

That the 84th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby direct the governor of the State of Texas to posthumously award the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor to Marcelino Serna in recognition of his valiant efforts during World War I.