

2006 SESSION

INTRODUCED
REPRINT

067008376

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 109

Offered January 11, 2006

Prefiled January 10, 2006

Celebrating the life of Lieutenant Colonel Darel Dean Leetun.

Patrons—Landes; Senator: Hanger

WHEREAS, United States Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Darel Dean Leetun of Hettinger, North Dakota, was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery on July 8, 2005, 39 years after his fighter-bomber was shot down during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, during the memorial ceremony, the family was reminded that Darel Dean Leetun had received the Bronze Star Medal, the Air Medal, the Purple Heart, and the Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross for his extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over North Vietnam on September 17, 1966; and

WHEREAS, on that fateful day, then Captain Leetun led a group of F-105D Thunderchiefs against a high priority and heavily defended target near the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi; and

WHEREAS, embroiled by intense and deadly flak and hostile MiGs, Captain Leetun's jet was hit by an enemy surface-to-air missile; however, he managed to remain in formation determined to deliver high explosive ordnance directly on the target; and

WHEREAS, after a successful bomb release, Captain Leetun's aircraft went out of control and crashed approximately 10 miles from the target area; other pilots witnessed the impact, but neither received an emergency signal nor saw a parachute; and

WHEREAS, Keith Leetun was only six years old when his father was shot down and declared missing in action; the pilot's remains were later recovered from a hillside in Lang Son Province by a joint United States and Vietnamese search team with the help of local villagers, positively identified by American forensic experts in Hawaii by way of family DNA, and brought home to rest in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, in attendance at the graveside service for Lieutenant Colonel Leetun were his widow Janet Chamberlen and daughter Kerri Cain, both of Charlottesville, and his son Keith Leetun and wife Rene of Weyers Cave; Keith Leetun's children, Jack, Joni, and Jane sang "America the Beautiful" as a tribute to their grandfather; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Colonel Leetun's death is a reminder of the valuable service and noble sacrifice made by every man and woman who has served in the armed forces at home and overseas and whose devotion to duty has ensured our country's lasting freedom; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of a courageous American patriot, Lieutenant Colonel Darel Dean Leetun; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Lieutenant Colonel Darel Dean Leetun as an expression of the high regard in which his memory is held by the members of the General Assembly and the citizens of Virginia and the nation.

INTRODUCED

HJ109