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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 304

Offered March 6, 2006

*Celebrating the life of Lieutenant Colonel Claude R. Kinsey, Jr.*

Patrons—O'Brien; Delegate: Watts

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Colonel Claude R. Kinsey, Jr., one of the earliest United States flying aces of World War II, died on February 4, 2006; and

WHEREAS, Claude Kinsey entered the United States Army Air Force as an enlisted soldier and was trained as a pilot while still a Private; and

WHEREAS, credited with shooting down seven enemy planes over North Africa from January 29 through April 5, 1943, Claude Kinsey was accidentally shot down by one of his own wingmen and had to bail out of his P-38 Lightning Fighter over enemy-held territory in Tunis; and

WHEREAS, severely injured and suffering from extensive burns, Claude Kinsey was captured by locals, who turned him over to the Italian Army; and

WHEREAS, transported from one POW camp to another, Claude Kinsey ended up in a camp near Sulmona, Italy, guarded by German soldiers; on the first night, he escaped and fled on foot, traveling 100 miles down the Apennine Mountains through Italy to Campobasso; and

WHEREAS, when he finally made it to the front lines, Claude Kinsey was found by a squad of Canadian soldiers who helped him find his own unit, the 82nd Fighter Group, 96th Fighter Squadron, which was camped nearby; and

WHEREAS, during his distinguished military career, Claude Kinsey earned the Distinguished Service Cross, the Purple Heart, and nine Air Medal awards; and

WHEREAS, until the end of the war, Claude Kinsey was assigned as a P-38 combat pilot instructor and toured the country promoting the sale of war bonds; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Claude Kinsey transferred to the Strategic Air Command, where he flew B-47 Stratojet bombers, some of which were equipped with nuclear weapons; and

WHEREAS, Claude Kinsey retired from the military in 1965 as a Lieutenant Colonel and a Squadron Commander; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Colonel Kinsey will be sorely missed by his family, his fellow pilots and comrades, his numerous friends and admirers, and the citizens of the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly mourn the passing of an exemplary pilot, patriot, and American hero, Lieutenant Colonel Claude R. Kinsey, Jr.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Lieutenant Colonel Claude R. Kinsey, Jr., as an expression of the General Assembly's great respect for his memory.

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