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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 455

Offered February 16, 2009

Celebrating the accomplishments of the Virginia National Guard and the Virginia Defense Force in 2008.

Patrons—Herring, Barker, Blevins, Colgan, Cuccinelli, Deeds, Edwards, Hanger, Houck, Howell, Hurt, Locke, Lucas, Marsh, Martin, McDougle, McEachin, Miller, J.C., Miller, Y.B., Newman, Norment, Northam, Obenshain, Petersen, Puckett, Puller, Quayle, Reynolds, Ruff, Saslaw, Smith, Stolle, Stosch, Stuart, Ticer, Vogel, Wagner, Wampler, Watkins and Whipple

WHEREAS, the courageous soldiers and airmen of the Virginia National Guard have made outstanding and valuable contributions to the defense of the United States and the security of the Commonwealth and have advanced the cause of freedom around the world; and

WHEREAS, these same soldiers and airmen have put themselves in harm's way, fought bravely, made great sacrifices, and provided an example of selfless service for all the citizens of the Commonwealth and the nation; and

WHEREAS, the following units have completed remarkable deployments and successfully returned from active duty in 2008: 116th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Battalion 116th Infantry, 2nd Squadron 183rd Cavalry, 237th Engineer Company, E and F Companies 429th Brigade Support Battalion, and A Company 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion; and

WHEREAS, more than 1,300 Virginia National Guard soldiers have returned successfully from supporting the "surge" in Iraq, thereby significantly increasing the safety of the civilian Iraqi population and furthering our nation's interests; and

WHEREAS, more than 120 Virginia National Guard soldiers went on state active duty in February to join in the battle against wildfires raging throughout the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia National Guard ended the month of April with more than 8,000 soldiers for the first time since 1994; and

WHEREAS, pilots from the Virginia National Guard's 192nd Fighter Wing took to the sky in state-of-the-art F-22 Raptors for the first time; and

WHEREAS, a special response force of the Virginia National Guard, the Chemical, Biological, Radiological/Nuclear and Explosive Enhanced Response Force or CERF, was validated during an external evaluation exercise, to provide support to first responders and civil authorities if the Commonwealth was attacked with a high explosive, chemical, radiological, or nuclear weapon of mass destruction; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia National Guard's Officer Candidate School graduated its 50th class; and

WHEREAS, a company of Virginia National Guard soldiers was the first National Guard unit to participate in an Army pilot program known as Warrior Adventure Quest, designed to curb high-risk behavior in redeploying soldiers; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Defense Force successfully conducted the most demanding field exercise attempted to date, having the largest participation ever of any training exercise at the division level; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia National Guard's Winchester-based 3rd Battalion, 116th Brigade Combat Team received the Walter T. Kerwin, Jr., Readiness Award for being the Army's most outstanding National Guard unit; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia National Guard's Gate City-based 1032nd Transportation Company won the Department of the Army's annual Philip A. Connelly Award for Excellence in Army Food Service in the National Guard Field Kitchen Category; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Virginia National Guard and its dedicated soldiers, airmen, Virginia Defense Force volunteers, and civilian employees, as well as their ever supportive family members for their devotion to duty and many outstanding and valuable contributions to the defense of the United States and the Commonwealth; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Major General Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, on behalf of the patriotic soldiers, airmen, Virginia Defense Force volunteers, civilian employees, and their collective families as an expression of the General Assembly's gratitude for their dedication to the citizens of the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world.

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