

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 292

Commending the 29th Infantry Division of the Virginia-Maryland-District of Columbia National Guard and the Virginia communities represented in the Normandy Invasion on the 66th anniversary of D-Day.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 19, 2010

Agreed to by the Senate, February 25, 2010

WHEREAS, June 6, 2010, is the 66th anniversary of the Normandy Invasion, commonly known as D-Day; this epic and decisive moment in World War II helped defeat Nazi rule in Europe and was the most massive military operation in world history; and

WHEREAS, the only National Guard division of the United States Army selected to participate in the initial assault on the coast of France was the 29th Infantry Division of the Virginia-Maryland-District of Columbia National Guard; this division was assigned as its objective that beach sector designated Omaha, which because of the fierce resistance encountered there soon became known as "Bloody Omaha"; and

WHEREAS, Virginia's historic "Stonewall Brigade," the 116th Infantry Regiment, was chosen to be in the first wave at Omaha and, after a bloody battle on the beach, finally succeeded in taking the high ground above it, and thus secured a beachhead in France; when "the Longest Day" ended, the courageous regiment of over 3,100 soldiers had suffered 1,107 casualties; and

WHEREAS, joining the 116th Infantry Regiment in the assault was Virginia's 111th Field Artillery Battalion and other smaller units from the Virginia National Guard, all elements of the 29th Infantry Division; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia communities represented in the D-Day Invasion were:

116th Infantry Regiment (Stonewall Brigade)

Headquarters and Headquarters Company-Roanoke

Anti-Tank Platoon-Roanoke

Medical Department Detachment-Staunton & Wytheville

Service Company-Roanoke

Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion-Roanoke

Company A-Bedford

Company B-Lynchburg

Company C-Harrisonburg

Company D-Roanoke

Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion-Altavista

Company E-Chase City

Company F-South Boston

Company G-Farmville

Company H-Martinsville

Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion-Winchester

Company I-Winchester

Company K-Charlottesville

Company L-Staunton

Company M-Emporia

29th Infantry Division Band (Virginia portion)-Roanoke

29th Signal Company-Norfolk

29th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop-Berryville

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 29th Infantry Division Artillery-Richmond

111th Field Artillery Battalion (First Virginia Artillery)

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery-Norfolk

Service Battery-Newport News

Battery A-Richmond

Battery B-Norfolk

Battery C-Portsmouth

227th Field Artillery Battalion (formerly 2nd Battalion, 111th Field Artillery)

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery-Richmond

Service Battery-post mobilization organization-no Virginia community

Battery A-Hampton

Battery B-Richmond

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Battery C-Fredericksburg

WHEREAS, many brave individuals participated in the Normandy Invasion and all who worked so hard and fought so valiantly are honored as heroes; and

WHEREAS, General George C. Marshall, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, helped plan the Allied invasion of France; he graduated from the Virginia Military Institute as First Captain of the Corps of Cadets in 1901; and

WHEREAS, a former commander of the 29th Infantry Division, Lieutenant General Leonard Gerow was promoted to command the V Corps (Fifth Corps), made up of the 1st and 29th Infantry Divisions, which were the first troops to land on Omaha Beach; he was a native of Petersburg and a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, Class of 1911; and

WHEREAS, on June 8, 1944, Technical Sergeant Frank D. Peregory of Charlottesville's Company K, from the 116th Infantry Regiment, single-handedly killed or captured over 25 enemy soldiers, earning the Congressional Medal of Honor, only to be killed in action six days later; and

WHEREAS, a graduate of The Citadel's Class of 1929 and a teacher and coach at Staunton Military Academy, Major Thomas D. Howie of Staunton's Company L, best known as "the Major of St Lo," was killed in action on July 17, 1944, while in command of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry, during its final drive to capture the strategic city of Saint-Lô; and

WHEREAS, commander of the 111th Field Artillery Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Thornton L. Mullins of Richmond, after his unit lost all of its guns but one in the English Channel when its landing craft were either swamped or destroyed by enemy fire, was killed in action while leading a band of survivors and destroying several enemy positions; he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the U.S. Army's second highest award for valor; and

WHEREAS, today, the 116th Infantry Regiment and other Virginia National Guard units of soldiers and airmen maintain a proud tradition with troops deployed in harm's way in the Global War on Terrorism, such as the mobilization to Iraq of the 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry on January 6, 2010, and deployments of the 3rd Battalion, 116th Infantry to Iraq and Afghanistan, and soldiers of the 116th joined soldiers from across the Virginia National Guard in several Embedded Training Teams serving in Afghanistan mentoring Afghan security forces; and

WHEREAS, since the start of the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, nearly 10,000 men and women of the Virginia National Guard have served in one or both conflicts, many on multiple tours, and a total of 13 members have died on active duty protecting our liberties, and it is fitting we honor and remember their service and sacrifices; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia and its citizens are indebted to and thankful for the D-Day soldiers, their successors in the ranks of the Virginia National Guard today, and their families for their valiant service and enormous sacrifice; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly commend the 29th Infantry Division of the Virginia-Maryland-District of Columbia National Guard and the Virginia communities represented in the Normandy Invasion on the 66th anniversary of D-Day that occurred on June 6, 1944, honoring the brave troops who served there, especially the soldiers of the Stonewall Brigade, 116th Infantry Regiment who fought in the first wave of attack and the 111th Field Artillery Battalion, both of which are a part of the 29th Infantry Division; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the General Assembly acknowledge the efforts of the Virginia National Guard to commemorate the Normandy Invasion with a Day of Awareness to remind Virginians of the sacrifices made to preserve their freedoms by those who fought on D-Day and by the men and women of the Virginia National Guard who continue to fight around the world to protect liberty for their countrymen; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Major General Robert B. Newman, Jr., the Adjutant General of Virginia, on behalf of the General Assembly in recognition of the soldiers of the 29th Infantry Division of the Virginia-Maryland-District of Columbia National Guard and the Virginia communities represented in the Normandy Invasion who fought at Normandy and on into the heart of Germany to help bring about the final victory over Nazi tyranny.