

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 339

Commending Colonel Claude M. Schonberger, USAFR Ret.

Agreed to by the Senate, January 20, 2011
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 28, 2011

WHEREAS, Colonel Claude M. Schonberger, United States Air Force Reserve Retired, of Mount Vernon, received the United States Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross at a special ceremony in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes on July 19, 2010; and

WHEREAS, Distinguished Flying Cross recipients have demonstrated "heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight"; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Schonberger received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his "demonstrated extraordinary flying skills and courage against the Obertraubling Airdrome in Regensburg, Germany," on February 16, 1945; and

WHEREAS, the then Lieutenant Schonberger, assigned to the 759th Bomb Squadron, 459th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force, was flying a B-24 aircraft loaded with bombs when his aircraft took heavy enemy fire; and

WHEREAS, despite an uncontrollable propeller in one engine and a fire in another engine, Lieutenant Schonberger "continued on the bomb run and released his bombs with considerable accuracy"; and

WHEREAS, on his next and last combat mission, enemy fire blew apart Lieutenant Schonberger's plane, killing most of his crew; and

WHEREAS, because of the chaos of the explosion, no one saw that Lieutenant Schonberger had been blown away from the plane and was able to parachute to the ground, and the United States Air Force listed him as missing in action; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Schonberger received aid from an Italian family for his burns and injuries before being captured by the Nazis, interrogated at Nuremberg, and sent to a prison camp for the remainder of the war; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Schonberger's Distinguished Flying Cross unsigned citation papers resided in his personal effects, which had been sent back to his family after he was reported missing in action; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Lieutenant Schonberger returned to civilian life, worked as an air safety investigator for the Civil Aeronautics Board, raised a family, and contributed to his community; and

WHEREAS, decades later, Colonel Schonberger's squadron commander was located and verified the Distinguished Flying Cross citation papers and the Air Force Board for the Correction of Military Records approved the award; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Schonberger remembered his fallen comrades at the ceremony, reading the names of all of his crew members, a testament to their courage, brotherhood, and patriotism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly commend Colonel Claude M. Schonberger, USAFR Ret., for his receipt of the United States Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Colonel Claude M. Schonberger, USAFR Ret., as an expression of the General Assembly's congratulations and gratitude for his distinguished service to his country.

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