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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 78

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 12, 2022

Memorializing the President of the United States to designate a single state funeral to be held upon the death of the last living Medal of Honor recipient from World War II.

Patron—Reid

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, World War II, the most widespread war in history, lasted from 1939 until 1945; and WHEREAS, the United States entered the war in 1941, following an attack on Pearl Harbor by Japanese fighter planes, and more than 16 million Americans ultimately served their country and the Allied powers during the war; and

WHEREAS, the men and women who served the United States in World War II have been collectively called the Greatest Generation for their selfless sacrifice and heroic achievements during one of the darkest periods in modern history; and

WHEREAS, the Congressional Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration that is awarded by the United States government and is presented by the President of the United States on behalf of the United States Congress; and

WHEREAS, the Medal of Honor is only conferred upon members of the United States Armed Forces who demonstrate conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in action against an enemy of the United States or an opposing foreign force; and

WHEREAS, only 473 Americans were awarded the Medal of Honor during World War II, and only one of those Americans, Hershel Woodrow Williams of West Virginia, remains alive; and

WHEREAS, Hershel Woodrow "Woody" Williams enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1943 and deployed to the Pacific theater after training in demolitions and the use of flamethrowers; he distinguished himself during the Battle of Iwo Jima by maneuvering under heavy fire to singlehandedly clear an enemy bunker, then destroying several more bunkers over the course of an intense four-hour battle; and

WHEREAS, Woody Williams received the Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman on October 5, 1945; and

WHEREAS, the President of the United States has the sole authority to designate a state funeral; and

WHEREAS, historically, the President of the United States has designated state funerals for former presidents, generals, and other extraordinary Americans; General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Allied Commander in the Pacific theatre, and General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander of the European theatre, were each honored by the nation with state funerals; and

WHEREAS, the selfless, courageous men and women who served under them deserve the same honor of special recognition at a state funeral to be held upon the death of the last living Medal of Honor recipient from World War II; and

WHEREAS, a single state funeral to be held upon the death of the last living Medal of Honor recipient from World War II would provide national recognition to all 16 million soldiers, sailors, and airmen who served in the United States Armed Forces from 1941 to 1945; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the President of the United States be urged to designate a single state funeral to be held upon the death of the last living Medal of Honor recipient from World War II; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the United States Senate, and the members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.

INTRODUCED

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