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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 291

Offered January 9, 2013

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Celebrating the life of John Robert Slaughter, Sr.

Patrons—Edwards and Smith

WHEREAS, John Robert Slaughter, Sr., of Roanoke, who stormed the beaches of Normandy on D-Day and became one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, died on May 29, 2012; and

WHEREAS, a native of Tennessee, John "Bob" Slaughter joined the Virginia National Guard when he was just 15 years old, guarding Maryland's Eastern Shore and helping United States Marines as they practiced landings at Virginia Beach as the United States entered World War II; and

WHEREAS, Bob Slaughter then boarded the RMS *Queen Mary* for Europe, serving in England until June 6, 1944, when, as a sergeant and squad leader in Company D, 116th Infantry, 29th Division, he landed on the beaches of Normandy in the largest amphibious operation in history; and

WHEREAS, for the next 11 months, Bob Slaughter pushed forward, helping liberate France as he advanced toward Germany; he sustained two injuries from gunfire but returned to the front each time to aid in the Allied cause; and

WHEREAS, following the war, Bob Slaughter returned to Roanoke, marrying and raising a family, coaching baseball, earning an associate's degree from Virginia Western Community College, and working for the *Roanoke Times & World-News*; and

WHEREAS, after retirement from the newspaper, Bob Slaughter, driven by the same commitment to his fellow soldiers that had marked his military service, decided to take action to remember the sacrifices of his fallen comrades-in-arms; and

WHEREAS, Bob Slaughter joined with other Roanoke-area veterans to form a foundation to build a memorial and wrote a memoir about his own experiences entitled *Omaha Beach and Beyond*; and

WHEREAS, Bob Slaughter's quest to honor those who fell on June 6, 1944, gained national attention, resulting in a profile in the *Washington Post* and stories in *People* and *Newsweek*; he was also included in historian Stephen Ambrose's book *D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II*; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, Bob Slaughter returned to Europe, walking the beaches of Normandy alongside President Bill Clinton on the 50th anniversary of the invasion that marked the beginning of the end of Nazi domination; and

WHEREAS, Bob Slaughter's tireless efforts led to increased interest in a national memorial to honor those who perished on the sandy shores of Normandy in the quest to advance freedom, and the small town of Bedford, which suffered the highest per capita loss in the nation on D-Day, offered a beautiful spot on which to build the memorial; and

WHEREAS, on June 6, 2001, Bob Slaughter, the then-chair of the National D-Day Memorial Foundation, listened alongside federal, state, and local dignitaries and area residents as President George W. Bush dedicated the National D-Day Memorial; and

WHEREAS, today, approximately 75,000 visitors a year have the opportunity to remember and reflect on the bravery and sacrifices of those who fought and died on June 6, 1944, as part of Operation Overlord when they visit the National D-Day Memorial; and

WHEREAS, a man of tremendous determination and character, Bob Slaughter lived a long and fruitful life and faithfully served his family, community, country, and fellow soldiers; and

WHEREAS, Bob Slaughter leaves behind his devoted wife of 65 years, Margaret; children, Bob and Hunter, and their families; numerous other family members, friends, and admirers; and an enduring memorial for those who sacrificed their futures for freedom; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of a courageous and patriotic Virginian, John Robert Slaughter, Sr.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of John Robert Slaughter, Sr., as an expression of the General Assembly's respect for his memory.

INTRODUCED

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