

2014 SPECIAL SESSION I

INTRODUCED

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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5083

Offered September 18, 2014

Commending Billy Mills.

Patron—Ebbin

WHEREAS, Billy Mills, a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, was born and raised on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and for nearly 30 years, he has been the national spokesperson for Running Strong for American Indian Youth, a nonprofit organization based in Alexandria dedicated to serving Native Americans across the country; and

WHEREAS, although orphaned at a young age, as a child Billy Mills learned a powerful lesson from his father—to follow his dream—which he carries with him to this day and shares with other young people; and

WHEREAS, though Billy Mills struggled with hardship, isolation, and racism as a student at the University of Kansas, where he earned a track scholarship, he never let that deter him as he became an All-American and one of the top college runners in the nation; and

WHEREAS, after meeting and marrying the love of his life, Patricia, while they were both students at the University of Kansas, and after earning his bachelor's degree, Billy Mills joined the United States Marine Corps, where he became an officer in service to his country; and

WHEREAS, despite being diagnosed as hypoglycemic, Billy Mills pressed on to achieve his dream of not only participating in the 1964 Olympics but becoming an Olympic gold medalist 50 years ago on October 14, 1964; and

WHEREAS, against all odds, Billy Mills not only kept pace with the two fastest distance runners in the world in the 10,000-meter run but reserved enough energy to sprint past both of them in the final seconds of the race, and he remains the only American to win the gold in that event; and

WHEREAS, following his historic win, Billy Mills returned to his homeland, where he was given the name by tribal elders of "Tamakoce Tekihila," which means "Love Your Country"; and

WHEREAS, Billy Mills has given back to his people, as well as Native American peoples across the country, through his organization, Running Strong for American Indian Youth, which he cofounded in 1986 with longtime Virginia resident Gene Krizek, founder of Christian Relief Services Charities; and

WHEREAS, through Running Strong for American Indian Youth, Billy Mills and Gene Krizek have constructed youth centers and three Native-owned dialysis clinics; drilled nearly 500 water wells; implemented food and gardening programs, including children's gardens; initiated language preservation programs; helped with home construction and home repair; started backpack food programs; and provided emergency utility assistance during cold, western winter months; and

WHEREAS, Billy Mills continues to be a role model, mentor, and inspiration for countless young people, Native American and otherwise, who by his example can see greater possibility in their own lives, no matter what hardships they must overcome to succeed; and

WHEREAS, Billy Mills is an outspoken advocate for Native American rights, enforcement of treaties broken by the United States government, recognition of tribal sovereignty, protection of Native American burial and religious sites, and the elimination of Native Americans as mascots for sports teams; and

WHEREAS, Billy Mills was recognized by President Barack Obama, who presented him with the 2012 Presidential Citizens Medal, the nation's second highest civilian award, on February 15, 2013, at a White House ceremony recognizing his rise above adversity, the winning of the Olympic gold medal, and decades of lifting other young men and women toward their aspirations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Billy Mills on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his historic Olympic gold medal performance and for his service to Native Americans across the nation through Running Strong for American Indian Youth; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Billy Mills as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for Billy Mills' dedication to bettering the lives of all Native Americans and best wishes for the future.

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