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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 620

Offered January 11, 2017

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Commending the 82nd Airborne Division.

Patrons—Rush, Freitas, Helsel, Webert and Yancey

WHEREAS, the 82nd Airborne Division, constituted and organized in August 1917, has been one of the United States' most valuable fighting units and remains one of the most highly trained and experienced light infantry divisions in the world; and

WHEREAS, originally known as the 82nd Division, the 82nd Airborne Division drew members from all 48 states and earned the nickname All-American, which was the basis for its distinctive shoulder insignia; and

WHEREAS, the 82nd Division served with distinction on the Western Front of World War I, reinforcing the Allies' lines and making notable contributions to the St. Mihiel offensive and the Meuse-Argonne offensive, the final major engagement of the war; and

WHEREAS, after World War I, the 82nd Division was deactivated, then reconstituted as a reserve unit in 1921; the unit was redesignated as the 82nd Airborne Division at the outset of World War II and conducted parachute drops into Sicily and Salerno in 1943; the jump into Sicily was the first regimental-sized parachute operation conducted by the United States; and

WHEREAS, the 82nd Airborne Division continued to fight in the Mediterranean Theater until Operation Neptune in support of the D-Day invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944; the division saw 33 days of combat with no relief or replacements, completing every one of its missions and holding all captured ground; and

WHEREAS, in September 1944, the 82nd Airborne Division landed in the Netherlands as part of Operation Market Garden and captured its objectives between Grave and Nijmegen, then carried out a harrowing river assault to capture the Nijmegen road bridge; and

WHEREAS, the 82nd Airborne Division then participated in the famed Battle of the Bulge, holding the north end of a critical salient in the Ardennes Forest after a German counterattack in December 1944; after being forced to withdraw for the first time in its combat history in the face of more than four-to-one odds, the 82nd Airborne Division counterattacked and overran the Germans, capturing thousands of prisoners; and

WHEREAS, the 82nd Airborne Division finished World War II beyond the Elbe River, accepting the surrender of more than 150,000 German troops, then was deployed to Berlin for occupation duty; and

WHEREAS, after World War II, the 82nd Airborne Division was designated as a regular Army division and found a home at Fort Bragg in North Carolina; the unit was held in strategic reserve during the Korean War and was prepared to respond to Soviet aggression anywhere in the world; and

WHEREAS, in April 1965, elements of the 82nd Airborne Division deployed to the Dominican Republic as part of Operation Power Pack, and beginning in 1966, the division was deployed to Vietnam and saw intense fighting in the Mekong Delta and along the border with Cambodia; and

WHEREAS, following the Vietnam War, the 82nd Airborne Division became the nucleus of the Rapid Deployment Force, a mobile strike force at a permanent state of high readiness; in 1983, the division secured the Point Salinas Airport in Grenada during Operation Urgent Fury, which resulted in several refinements to doctrine, equipment, and interservice communication; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, the 82nd Airborne Division conducted its first combat drop since World War II to seize Torrijos International Airport in Panama during Operation Just Cause and conducted follow-on operations in Panama City and the areas surrounding the Panama Canal locks; and

WHEREAS, in 1990 and 1991, the 82nd Airborne Division participated in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; during the 100-hour ground war, the division pushed deep into Iraq, securing thousands of prisoners and tons of equipment, weapons, and ammunition; and

WHEREAS, in August 1992, the 82nd Airborne Division deployed to Florida to provide humanitarian relief following Hurricane Andrew; the division provided food, shelter, medical attention, and security to residents; and

WHEREAS, the 82nd Airborne Division was prepared to intervene in Haiti to depose the military dictatorship of Raoul Cédras in 1994 until the dictator stepped down and restored the democratically elected government, prompting some to comment that the 82nd Airborne Division's reputation alone was enough to avert conflict; and

WHEREAS, throughout the 1990s, the 82nd Airborne Division played integral roles in Operation

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59 Safe Haven and Operation Safe Passage in Panama and peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina
60 and Kosovo, including Operation Rapid Guardian, a 500-foot altitude jump near Pristina, Kosovo; and

61 WHEREAS, following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, elements of the 82nd Airborne
62 Division deployed to Afghanistan as early as October 2001 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom;
63 other elements of the division participated in the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and
64 helped secure the first free, national elections in Iraq in 2004; and

65 WHEREAS, over the next several years, the 82nd Airborne continued to carry out rapid deployment
66 operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and provided additional disaster relief and humanitarian assistance to
67 the victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005 and the earthquake in Haiti in 2010; and

68 WHEREAS, in November 2016, the 82nd Airborne Division deployed to Iraq to advise Iraqi Security
69 Forces as they attempted to retake the city of Mosul from the Islamic State as part of Operation Inherent
70 Resolve; and

71 WHEREAS, veterans of the 82nd Airborne Division have gone on to become leaders, mentors, and
72 innovators in a variety of fields and their communities, carrying with them the ethos of the
73 All-American Division as they strive for excellence in all they do; now, therefore, be it

74 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby
75 commend the 82nd Airborne Division for its exceptional service in defense of the nation on the occasion
76 of the 100th anniversary of its organization; and, be it

77 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution
78 for presentation to Major General Erik Kurilla, commanding officer of the 82nd Airborne Division, as
79 an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the division's storied history and legacy of
80 service.