

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 944

Commemorating the life and legacy of Desmond T. Doss.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 17, 2017
 Agreed to by the Senate, February 22, 2017

WHEREAS, Virginians of every generation have responded to the summons to defend their homes and hearths with armed force if need be; and

WHEREAS, Virginians have in every conflict since the Colonial era distinguished themselves honorably and even heroically on the battlefields of several continents; and

WHEREAS, to forgo the protection of arms, and yet still assist one's fellow soldiers amidst combat with enemy forces, and to do so without regard for one's own safety, but with full regard primarily for the obligations one holds toward Almighty God, is a summons reserved for those who conscientiously object to possessing arms while in the service of the country or Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, Virginia, in the heroic person of Desmond T. Doss, produced the first conscientious objector ever to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for action not only above but *far above* the call of duty during combat with enemy forces; and

WHEREAS, Desmond T. Doss was born in Lynchburg on February 7, 1919, and was raised as a Seventh-Day Adventist to observe Saturday as the Sabbath and to eschew violence of any kind; and

WHEREAS, although offered a deferment owing to his employment by the Naval Shipyard at Newport News, Desmond T. Doss volunteered for military service during the Second World War on April 1, 1942; and

WHEREAS, having declared himself a conscientious objector, Desmond T. Doss was assigned to 2nd Platoon, B Company, 1st Battalion, 307th Infantry, in the 77th Infantry Division; and

WHEREAS, while serving on the island of Guam in 1944, Desmond T. Doss was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for heroism for aiding wounded soldiers during heavy enemy fire; and

WHEREAS, during the Battle of Okinawa, near Urasoe-Mura, Ryukyu Islands, from April 29 to May 21, 1945, Desmond T. Doss engaged in "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action"; and

WHEREAS, as the official citation declares, "Private First Class Desmond Doss was a company aid man when the 1st Battalion assaulted a jagged escarpment 400 feet high. As our troops gained the summit, a heavy concentration of artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire crashed into them, inflicting approximately 75 casualties and driving the others back. Pfc. Doss refused to seek cover and remained in the fire-swept area with the many stricken, carrying all 75 casualties one-by-one to the edge of the escarpment and there lowering them on a pole-supported litter down the face of the cliff to friendly hands"; and

WHEREAS, Desmond T. Doss twice more over the coming days risked his life to rescue fallen comrades, despite having been severely wounded himself; and

WHEREAS, the official citation further declares, "Through his outstanding bravery and unflinching determination in the face of desperately dangerous conditions, Pfc. Doss saved the lives of many soldiers [and] his name became a symbol throughout the 77th Infantry Division for outstanding gallantry far above and beyond the call of duty"; and

WHEREAS, Desmond T. Doss, after several years of hospital care to heal his many wounds, made his home in rural Georgia with his wife, Dorothy Schutte Doss, and there the couple raised their son, Desmond T. (Tommy) Doss, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Desmond T. Doss passed away on March 23, 2006, at his then-home in Alabama and was laid to rest in the National Cemetery at Chattanooga, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the film *Hacksaw Ridge*, directed by Mel Gibson and nominated for six Academy Awards for 2017, has brought renewed nationwide attention to the inspiring faith and heroic sacrifices of Desmond T. Doss of Virginia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commemorate the life and legacy of Desmond T. Doss, a heroic veteran of World War II; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare copies of this resolution for presentation to Desmond T. Doss, Jr., American Legion Post 16 of Lynchburg, and the Desmond T. Doss Christian Academy of Lynchburg as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for his depth of belief, his bravery, and the simple integrity of a life informed wholly of religious faith.