

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 782

By Smith

A RESOLUTION to honor the Charles H. Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center in Chattanooga.

WHEREAS, the mission of the Charles H. Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center in Chattanooga is to memorialize the acts of valor demonstrated by the recipients of our highest military award and educate the next generation about the six character traits associated with their gallantry, from the First Medals forward; and

WHEREAS, the Heritage Center's 19,000-square-foot facility at the Aquarium Plaza in downtown Chattanooga features life-sized exhibits that tell the real-life stories of these ordinary people who demonstrated extraordinary heroism under the most difficult circumstances; and

WHEREAS, each of the Heritage Center's immersive exhibits uses innovative technologies to combine the sights and sounds of the Medal of Honor narratives with a vibrancy and immediacy of what happened on that day, thus creating an emotional engagement and a more profound, memorable experience for its visitors; and

WHEREAS, the Charles H. Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center is much more than a museum; while its administration and staff honor and respect the past, they are equally focused on helping shape the future through programs developed to build the next generation of heroes; and

WHEREAS, the Heritage Center's educational initiatives include Character Club for elementary schools and the Character Development Program for middle school and high school students; these programs reinforce the common character traits that are exemplified by Medal of Honor recipients: patriotism, citizenship, integrity, courage, sacrifice, and commitment; and

WHEREAS, the heritage of the Medal of Honor started on April 12, 1862, with the daring actions of Andrews' Raiders during "The Great Locomotive Chase" that resulted in the very first

Medals of Honor being bestowed upon nineteen selfless Union soldiers, four of whom are buried in the Chattanooga National Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, the very first Raider to receive the Medal of Honor was Private Jacob Parrott of Ohio, one of four Raiders to receive the Medal of Honor on March 25, 1863, which is now recognized as Medal of Honor Day; and

WHEREAS, this heritage continued later in 1863 with the heroic actions of thirty-three Medal of Honor recipients who served side-by-side in the Chattanooga Campaign during the Civil War, including the first and only woman to ever receive the Medal of Honor, Dr. Mary Walker; and

WHEREAS, in all, there were fifty-two Medals of Honor awarded for acts of valor in and around Chattanooga during the Civil War; this is the reason that Chattanooga is known as the Birthplace of the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, Chattanooga is also known for many other "firsts" in regard to Medal of Honor recipients: Arthur MacArthur and Douglas MacArthur, the first father/son recipients; Desmond Doss, the first conscientious objector; Paul Huff, first paratrooper; Ray Duke, first dual recipient (Medal of Honor and South Korea's version of the Medal, the Order of Military Merit, Taeguk); and Mitchell Stout, first Air Defender; and

WHEREAS, the Heritage Center is named in honor of Charles H. Coolidge of Signal Mountain, a U.S. Army Technical Sergeant who served in combat in the European Theater during World War II; and

WHEREAS, as a result of TSgt. Coolidge's heroic and superior leadership in the absence of a commanding officer, the mission of his combat group was accomplished during four days (October 24-27, 1944) of continuous fighting against numerically superior enemy troops in rain and cold and amid dense woods east of Belmont sur Buttant, France; and

WHEREAS, at the State level, Tennessee is home to thirty-two Medal of Honor recipients; one of these recipients, George L. Gillespie of Kingston, put his permanent stamp on the Medal of Honor when he designed, patented, and trademarked what would become the current version of the Medal of Honor in 1903; and

WHEREAS, while the Medal of Honor heritage starts in Chattanooga, its story is one that resonates nationwide, and every recipient has a narrative that is relevant to our lives today; and

WHEREAS, each of these amazing, inspiring, and all-too-often heartbreaking stories defines the meaning of valor and the virtue of putting service over self and serves as a testament to the amazing courage of ordinary people who rise up and meet the most daunting challenges during wartime; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend the Charles H. Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center in Chattanooga for bringing to life the combat experience of the recipients of our highest military award, educating our youth about the character traits associated with their gallantry, and inspiring visitors to internalize these values for the benefit of American society and themselves.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.