

2009-J3855

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION honoring Doris Miller posthumously for special recognition, and noting the significance of his purposeful life and his accomplishments as a member of the United States Navy

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend individuals and events which celebrate our Nation's great struggle to fulfill the promise of equality and opportunity for all; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Doris Miller posthumously for special recognition, and noting the significance of his purposeful life and his accomplishments as a member of the United States Navy; and

WHEREAS, On Thursday, February 11, 2010, the United States Postal Service will issue a "Distinguished Sailor Stamp" in Doris Miller's honor for serving with bravery and distinction as a member of the United States Navy during World War II; and

WHEREAS, The Doris Miller stamp features a detail from a photograph of Miller in 1942; beside the photograph is a depiction of the crest of the destroyer escort USS Miller (DE-1091), which was commissioned in 1973; and

WHEREAS, Petty Officer Doris Miller has been given the title of "the first African-American hero of World War II"; he became an inspiration to generations of Americans for his actions at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941; and

WHEREAS, Although he was only the first of a number of African-Americans to be recognized for their heroism in World War II, Doris Miller is singularly remembered for providing inspiration to a campaign for equal recognition and opportunity for Blacks in the military, a campaign that bore fruit in 1948 when President Truman ordered "that there shall be

equality and opportunity for all persons in the armed forces"; and

WHEREAS, Doris Miller, known as "Dorie" to shipmates and friends, was born in Waco, Texas, on October 12, 1919, to Henrietta and Conery Miller; and

WHEREAS, While attending Moore High School in Waco, Doris Miller was a fullback on the football team; he worked on his father's farm before enlisting in the U.S. Navy as Mess Attendant, Third Class, at Dallas, Texas, on September 16, 1939, to travel, and earn money for his family; and

WHEREAS, He later was commended by the Secretary of the Navy, and then advanced to Mess Attendant, Second Class and First Class, before being promoted to Cook, Third Class; and

WHEREAS, Following training at the Naval Training Station, Norfolk, Virginia, Doris Miller was assigned to the ammunition ship USS Pyro (AE-1) where he served as a Mess Attendant, and on January 2, 1940, was transferred to USS West Virginia (BB-48), where he became the ship's heavyweight boxing champion; and

WHEREAS, In July of that year he had temporary duty aboard USS Nevada (BB-36) at Secondary Battery Gunnery School; Doris Miller returned to USS West Virginia on August 3rd, and was serving in that battleship when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941; and

WHEREAS, Doris Miller had arisen at 6 a.m., and was collecting laundry when the alarm for general quarters sounded; he headed for his battle station, the anti-aircraft battery magazine amidship, only to discover that torpedo damage had wrecked it, so he went up to the deck; because of his physical prowess, he was assigned to carry wounded fellow sailors to places of greater safety; and

WHEREAS, He was then ordered by an officer to go to the bridge to aid the mortally wounded Captain of the ship; subsequently, Doris Miller maimed a 50-caliber Browning anti-aircraft machine gun until he ran out of ammunition and was ordered to abandon ship; and

WHEREAS, Of the 1,541 men on USS West Virginia during the attack, 130 were killed and 52 wounded; refloated, repaired, and modernized, the battleship served in the Pacific theater through to the end of the war in August of 1945; and

WHEREAS, Doris Miller was commended by the Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox on April 1, 1942, and on May 27th of that year, he received the Navy Cross, which Fleet Admiral (then Admiral) Chester W. Nimitz, the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet personally presented to Miller on board aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CV-6) for his extraordinary courage in battle; and

WHEREAS, On December 13, 1941, Doris Miller reported to USS Indianapolis (CA-35), and returned to the west coast of the United States in November of 1942; assigned to the newly constructed USS Liscome Bay (CVE-56) in the spring of 1943, he was on board that escort carrier during Operation Galvanic, the seizure of Makin and Tarawa Atolls in the Gilbert Islands; and

WHEREAS, Liscome Bay's aircraft supported operations ashore from November 20-23, 1943; at 5:10 a.m. on November 24th, while cruising near Butaritari Island, a single torpedo from Japanese submarine I-175 struck the escort carrier near the stern; the aircraft bomb magazine detonated a few moments later, sinking the warship within minutes; and

WHEREAS, Listed as missing following the loss of that escort carrier, Doris Miller was officially presumed dead on November 25, 1944, a year and a day after the loss of Liscome Bay; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the Navy Cross, Doris Miller was entitled to the Purple Heart Medal; the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; and the World War II Victory Medal; and

WHEREAS, Commissioned on June 30, 1973, USS Miller (FF-1091), a Knox-class frigate, was named in honor of Doris Miller; furthermore, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority dedicated a bronze commemorative plaque of Miller at the Miller Family Park located on the U.S. Naval Base, Pearl

Harbor, on October 11, 1991; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that the accomplishments of members of our Armed Forces who served valiantly and honorably in wars in which this country's freedom was at stake are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Doris Miller posthumously for special recognition, and noting the significance of his purposeful life and his accomplishments as a member of the United States Navy; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Doris Miller.