

2015-K605

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION honoring Sergeant Henry Johnson posthumously upon the occasion of receiving the prestigious Medal of Honor

WHEREAS, Members of the Armed Services from the State of New York, who have served so faithfully and courageously in wars in which our Nation's freedom was at stake, as well as in the preservation of peace during peacetime, deserve a special salute from this Legislative Body; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Sergeant Henry Johnson posthumously upon the occasion of receiving the prestigious Medal of Honor for his conspicuous gallantry during World War I, to be presented by President Barack Obama on Tuesday, June 2, 2015; and

WHEREAS, The Medal of Honor is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force which can be bestowed upon an individual serving in the Armed Services of the United States and is generally presented to its recipient by the President of the United States of America in the name of Congress; and

WHEREAS, Henry Johnson will receive the Medal of Honor posthumously for his actions while serving as a member of Company C, 369th Infantry Regiment, 93rd Division, American Expeditionary Forces; he distinguished himself during combat operations in the vicinity of the Tourbe and Aisne Rivers, northwest of Saint Menehoul, France, on May 15, 1918; and

WHEREAS, The 369th Infantry Regiment is known as the Harlem Hellfighters; and

WHEREAS, On June 5, 1917, then Private Henry Johnson entered the United States Army and was assigned to Company C, 15th New York Infantry Regiment, an all-black National Guard unit that would later become the 369th Infantry Regiment; the Regiment was ordered into battle in 1918, and he and his unit were brigaded with a French Army colonial unit in front-line combat; and

WHEREAS, While on night sentry duty on the night of May 14, 1918, into the early morning of May 15, 1918, Private Henry Johnson and a fellow soldier received a surprise attack by a German raiding party consisting of at least 12 soldiers; while under intense enemy fire and despite receiving significant wounds, Johnson mounted a brave retaliation resulting in several enemy casualties; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, when his fellow soldier was badly wounded, Private Henry Johnson prevented him from being taken prisoner by German forces; and

WHEREAS, Private Henry Johnson put himself in harms way by advancing from his position to engage an enemy soldier in hand-to-hand combat; displaying great courage, he held back the enemy force until they retreated; and

WHEREAS, Henry Johnson was promoted to Sergeant later in May 1918; he became the first American of any color, in any conflict, to receive the Croix de Guerre, France's highest military decoration; and

WHEREAS, President Theodore Roosevelt referred to Henry Johnson as "one of the five bravest Americans"; and

WHEREAS, After the end of the war, Johnson returned to upstate New York; he died, penniless, on the streets of Albany, New York, in 1929; in 2002, his grave was found in Arlington National Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, In 1996, Henry Johnson was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart; in 2003, he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Army's second-highest award; and

WHEREAS, The dedication and sacrifices of our military personnel ensure our continued role as a Nation which embodies the ideals of democracy, and is a defender of liberty for peoples throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, The banner of freedom will always wave over this great Nation, the land of the free and the home of the brave; and

WHEREAS, The freedoms and security we cherish as Americans come at a

very high price for those serving in the military in times of conflict;
it is fitting and proper that we who are the beneficiaries of those who
risk their lives, leaving their families behind, express our appreci-
ation and eternal gratitude for their sacrifices and courageous acts;
now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to
honor Sergeant Henry Johnson posthumously upon the occasion of receiving
the prestigious Medal of Honor; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be tran-
smitted to the family of Sergeant Henry Johnson.