

2015-J2770

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION honoring Michael Smith upon the occasion of his designation as a recipient of the Liberty Medal, the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the New York State Senate

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon the people of the State of New York to recognize and acknowledge those within our midst who have made significant contributions to the quality of life therein; and

WHEREAS, From time to time, this Legislative Body takes note of certain extraordinary individuals it wishes to recognize for their valued contributions to the success and progress of society and publicly acknowledge their endeavors which have enhanced the basic humanity among us all; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Michael Smith upon the occasion of his designation as recipient of the Liberty Medal, the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the New York State Senate; and

WHEREAS, The New York State Senate Liberty Medal was established by resolution and is awarded to individuals who have merited special commendation for exceptional, heroic, or humanitarian acts on behalf of their fellow New Yorkers; and

WHEREAS, As the third shift was winding down on the morning of February 11, 2014, Greg Kurelko, a 46-year-old surface maintenance worker and third shift group leader at the American Rock Salt mine in Mount Morris, New York, told fellow workers in the lunch room that he was experiencing chest pains; and

WHEREAS, While Mr. Kurelko did not know it yet, he was experiencing what likely would have been a fatal heart attack if it had occurred at some other place where help was not so swiftly at hand; and

WHEREAS, After initially resisting his co-workers' advice that an ambulance be called, Mr. Kurelko walked to the changing room, where his symptoms began worsening, and third shift electrician Colin Keller made the call for an ambulance; third shift mechanic Gary Morrison helped Mr. Kurelko back into the lunch room and went to get the mine's resident emergency medical technician; and

WHEREAS, First shift underground scaler operator John Ayers had arrived at work early that morning as is his habit; Mr. Ayers, who possesses extensive emergency rescue experience, having served for 15 years as an EMT with Mount Morris Ambulance and later as Captain for Cuylerville Ambulance, was summoned from the changing room; upon entering the lunchroom, Mr. Ayers found Mr. Kurelko slumped over the picnic table and unconscious; Mr. Ayers instantly hit his page phone code which alerts the entire mine; he described the situation and called out for assistance from anyone in the area; and

WHEREAS, Checking Mr. Kurelko's pulse, he discovered Mr. Kurelko had suffered a massive heart attack and was in full cardiac arrest; taking his pocket knife out, Mr. Ayers cut Mr. Kurelko's shirt to expose his chest so the defibrillator pad could be positioned; Mike "Lumpy" Smith, a first shift surface electrician with Mr. Morrison and Mr. Keller, swiftly arrived with the defibrillator and trauma bag from a nearby first aid station; and

WHEREAS, As soon as the pad was positioned on Mr. Kurelko's chest, the defibrillator went to shock mode; after a single shock, the machine gave the verbal indication to switch to CPR; Mr. Keller did one cycle of 15 compressions, and Mr. Smith applied the two breaths into the mask; a second cycle was begun, and during the first or second compression, Mr. Kurelko opened his eyes and yelled "Ow!", at which point the rescuers breathed a sigh of joy and relief; and

WHEREAS, While only about five minutes had passed from the time Mr. Kurelko had slumped to the floor, it was a crucial period of time; without the availability of the rescue equipment and the proximity of well trained personnel, the incident may have ended in tragedy; and

WHEREAS, It takes a special dedication and a strong desire to help someone in a time of need; and

WHEREAS, Observing that special recognition should be given to those who work so assiduously for the betterment of their communities and their colleagues, and that they should be acknowledged publicly for their heroic actions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Michael Smith upon the occasion of his designation as a recipient of the Liberty Medal, the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the New York State Senate; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Mr. Michael Smith.