

2015-J5521

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commending Phil Keith upon the occasion of being selected as the May honoree of the Veteran's Flag Ceremony hosted by the Hampton Bays Union Free School District

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

WHEREAS, It is the intent of this Legislative Body to commend those who have served in times of active conflict, as well as those who have served in times of peace; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commend Phil Keith upon the occasion of being selected as the May honoree of the Veteran's Flag Ceremony hosted by the Hampton Bays Union Free School District; and

WHEREAS, The Hampton Bays Union Free School District, in partnership with the American Legion Hand-Aldrich Post 924 and VFW Post 5350, proudly honors Phil Keith for his service to the United States by flying a flag in his honor for the entire month of May at the Hampton Bays Elementary School; and

WHEREAS, Born in 1946, in Springfield, Massachusetts, Phil Keith grew up in nearby East Long Meadow; after graduating in the first class of East Long Meadow High School in 1964, he attended Harvard University; as a freshman, he joined the Navy ROTC and was given a full scholarship for his remaining three years at college; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from Harvard University in 1968, Phil Keith was proudly commissioned as an officer in the United States Navy and trained on several vessels, including both diesel and nuclear-powered destroyers and submarines; and

WHEREAS, Phil Keith was then accepted to Navy Flight School in Pensa-

cola, Florida; for 14 months he learned to fly a prop driven T-34 training aircraft and a Lockheed F-9; after successfully completing flight school, he studied advanced flight training on the iconic McDonnell-Douglas F-4 Phantom, where he learned to take off and land on aircraft carriers and qualified on the USS Lexington; and

WHEREAS, In August of 1969, Phil Keith graduated flight school and subsequently, earned his Gold Aviator's Wings; from there, he was assigned to a combat fighter squadron, which was in need of a legal officer, so he returned to school in Newport, Rhode Island; and

WHEREAS, In November of 1969, Phil Keith was assigned to the Fighting Falcons, the squadron VF 96 aboard the USS Constellation, off the coast of Ton-Kin in Vietnam; he and his fellow pilots flew close air support missions to help the Marines in the jungles; and

WHEREAS, In addition, the Fighting Falcons flew combat air patrols, flying protective cover for planes going into and coming out of North Vietnam on bombing raids; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1970s, when he was on his second tour in Vietnam, Phil Keith was flying his 272nd mission when his F-4 was hit by a North Vietnamese missile; Phil and his weapon systems officer were both badly wounded and the F-4 was badly damaged, one engine was shot out and there was a loss of flight control; and

WHEREAS, An expert pilot, Phil Keith managed to fly the crippled jet back to the carrier; at that point, he realized that his arresting hook, the piece of equipment across the back of the ship that grabs the landing plane was not functioning; the crew of the USS Constellation quickly rigged a huge net on the ship's deck and when Phil came in for a landing, the net caught him as he careened down the flight deck; and

WHEREAS, For his meritorious service, Phil Keith was the recipient of the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Flying Cross for saving the life of his WSO and managing the plane back to the carrier; Phil spent the next six months recuperating in Hawaii and working as a legal officer;

and

WHEREAS, During this time, Phil Keith wrote several articles for local papers about some universities removing ROTCs from their campuses due to the unpopularity of the Vietnam War; these articles caught the attention of Navy officials and consequently, Phil was assigned to work in an Admiral's office; and

WHEREAS, A pilot at heart, Phil Keith was sent back to Vietnam for a third tour; although his injuries precluded him from flying any aircraft with an ejection seat, he transitioned to the Lockheed EP-3, an aircraft used for spying and reconnaissance; and

WHEREAS, For the next 14 years, Phil Keith continued to serve in Naval Intelligence, a position from which he retired after 24 years of active duty; and

WHEREAS, After Phil Keith's much deserved retirement from the military, he started to work at a software development company, where he rose through the ranks, ultimately serving as its Vice President of Marketing in Manhattan; and

WHEREAS, After visiting The Hamptons on Long Island, Phil Keith moved to Water Mill in 1991, where he started his own consulting company and served as the Executive in Residence at Long Island University; and

WHEREAS, An accomplished author, Phil Keith has written a book about World War I, World War II and two books about the war in Vietnam; currently, he is writing a book about Eugene Bullard, the first African-American fighter pilot; and

WHEREAS, With him throughout have been his three daughters, and one son, all of whom feel privileged to be a part of his life and rejoice in his accomplishments; 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, Having exhibited their patriotism both at home and abroad,

these men and women demonstrated their love for their country and merit forevermore, the highest respect of their State and Nation; and WHEREAS, Our Nation's veterans deserve to be recognized, commended and thanked by the people of the State of New York for their service and for their dedication to their communities, their State and their Nation;

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now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend Phil Keith upon the occasion of being selected as the May honoree of the Veteran's Flag Ceremony hosted by the Hampton Bays Union Free School District; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Phil Keith.