

2015-J6077

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the untimely death of Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa of Long Island, New York, and paying tribute to his courageous actions as a member of the New York Air National Guard

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to memorialize and honor the courage and bravery of members of the United States Armed Forces who have lost their lives while carrying out missions to ensure our continued role as a nation which embodies the ideals of democracy and as a defender of liberty for people throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, It is with feelings of deepest regret that this Legislative Body mourns the untimely death of Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa of Long Island, New York, and pay tribute to his courageous actions as a member of the New York Air National Guard; and

WHEREAS, A 14-year Veteran of the United States Air Force, Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa died on Monday, December 21, 2015, at the age of 31, while honorably serving his country in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, While on his last and final deployment to Afghanistan, Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa distinguished himself by displaying great heroism as the Tactical Security Element Truck Commander; while conducting outside the wire human intelligence operations, a suicide bomber rode his explosive laden motorcycle through Louis' team; recognizing the imminent danger and with selfless disregard for his own personal safety, he and Technical Sergeant Joe "Superman" Lemm placed themselves between their fellow team members and the terrorist's motorcycle; and

WHEREAS, As the men maneuvered into fighting position, the suicide bomber cowardly detonated his deadly explosive; Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa and his fellow officer's incredibly heroic positioning resulted in their selfless exposure to the brunt of the deadly blast which safeguarded two of their fellow team members and ensured the survival of a

fellow defender; and

WHEREAS, Born on October 7, 1984, in East Patchogue, New York, Louis Bonacasa was a compassionate child who was happily raised in a close-knit family; and

WHEREAS, Two days after graduating from Newfield High School in 2002, Louis Bonacasa, at the young age of 17, enlisted in the Air Force and entered active duty; this valiant young man was greatly influenced by the tragic events of 9/11 and joined the military to support and defend his beloved country; and

WHEREAS, Louis Bonacasa, affectionately known as Bones, was stationed at Hill Air Force Base in Utah, for four years where he met his wife, Deborah, who is also a Veteran; the couple were married in 2004, and six years later they had their first child, Lilianna; and

WHEREAS, Louis Bonacasa excelled at his job as an Emergency Actions Controller and was quickly promoted to Senior Airman Below the Zone for performing duties above expectations amongst his peers, and Airman of the Quarter by a panel of high-ranking officials; and

WHEREAS, In 2008, Louis Bonacasa re-enlisted as a Security Forces member in the New York Air National Guard with the 106th Rescue Wing; shortly thereafter, he learned of the unique and challenging mission of the 105th Base Defense Squadron and wanted to be part of a team of passionate Defenders who embraced the concept of leading from the front and acknowledged the risks; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, Louis Bonacasa joined the 105th Airlift Wing and became a Defender with the 105th Base Defense Squadron, where he was a vital part of a strong brotherhood; and

WHEREAS, An exceptional leader, Louis Bonacasa served four deployment tours between Qatar, Iraq, and Afghanistan; many of the younger Airmen looked to him for guidance and he did not hesitate to help others; and

WHEREAS, For his steadfast and meritorious military service, Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa was the recipient of numerous awards and deco-

rations including Bronze Star with Valor, Purple Heart, Air Force Achievement Medal with oak leaf cluster, Combat Action Medal, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with bronze service star, Iraq Campaign Medal with bronze service Star, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, and Air Force Expeditionary Service Ribbon with gold border and oak leaf cluster as well as the Armed Forces Reserve Medal with "M" device and numeral "2"; and

WHEREAS, This valiant soldier was also named an Honorary OSI Agent and was the recipient of The Harry Crooke Award; and

WHEREAS, Louis Bonacasa will be remembered for his keen sense of humor and striking personality; a role model for all, he strived each day to make a lasting and positive impact on those around him; and

WHEREAS, A dedicated and skilled Airman and a loving family man, Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa always tried to find ways to improve himself as a person and to ensure a bright future for his daughter; subsequently, he enrolled in classes at Suffolk County Community College in the summer of 2015 for the Dietetic Technician program, where he learned about nutrition and how to help people take control of their health by making better food choices; and

WHEREAS, An excellent student, he maintained a GPA of 3.5; Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa's favorite class was English and he proved to be an outstanding writer; in May of 2015, he was awarded the Harry Crooke Award for his essay entitled "Back in the Sandbox"; and

WHEREAS, After college, he dreamed of opening his own nutrition business and penning a non-traditional cookbook; and

WHEREAS, Despite all his achievements, Louis Bonacasa remained a humble man who was gifted with a joyful sense of humor, often making people laugh out loud; Louis lived each day by the values he held close to his heart: work hard to play hard, and cherish family and friends because they are everything; and

WHEREAS, A devoted family man, Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa is survived by his parents, Vincent M. and Diana O. Bonacasa; his wife of

11 years, Deborah A. Bonacasa; his daughter, Lilianna M.; two sisters, Gabriela M. and Raquel A.; a brother, Vincent C.; and one niece, Jayla M.; as well as many aunts, uncles, cousins, extended family and friends; and

WHEREAS, Residents of this great State must never forget the courage

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with which our men and women served this country, and must recognize that no greater debt is owed than that owed to those who give of their lives for their beloved Nation; 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 appreciation and eternal gratitude for their sacrifices and courageous acts; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the untimely death of Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa of Long Island, New York, paying tribute to his courageous actions as a member of the New York Air National Guard; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Staff Sergeant Louis Bonacasa.