

2015-J6457

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 98th Anniversary of the Battle of Belleau Wood on June 25, 2016

WHEREAS, It is the intent of this Legislative Body to commemorate events of historical significance as well as to honor members of the Armed Services from the State of New York, who have courageously sacrificed their lives in order to preserve the principles of freedom and democracy for all the citizens of this great Nation; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 98th Anniversary of the Battle of Belleau Wood: Honoring our World War I and Marine Corps History, on Saturday, June 25, 2016, at the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, New Windsor, New York; and

WHEREAS, The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor will commemorate the 98th Anniversary of the Battle of Belleau Wood; this program will highlight not only this first major American offensive of World War I, but

also the role of the United States Marines who were engaged there; and

WHEREAS, Belleau Wood has become an integral part of Marine Corps lore as it was at this battle that the Marine Corps was transformed into the large scale fighting force that we think of today; the program will include a lecture followed by a short film, generously loaned to the Hall of Honor by the National Museum of the Marine Corps, depicting a Marine attack during this battle; and

WHEREAS, Comprising two related actions, firstly at Chateau-Thierry from June 3-4, 1918, and then at Belleau Wood itself from June 6-26, 1918, the Battle of Belleau Wood saw the re-capture by United States forces of the wood on the Metz-Paris road taken at the end of May by German Seventh Army forces arriving at the Marne River around Chateau-Thierry, and held by four divisions as part of the German Aisne offen-

sive; and

WHEREAS, Chateau-Thierry formed the tip of the German advance towards Paris, some 50 miles south-west; defended by U.S. Second and Third Divisions, the Americans launched a counter-attack on June 3-4, 1918, with the assistance of the French Tenth Colonial Division; in a spirited action, together they succeeded in pushing the Germans back across the Marne to Jaulgonne; and

WHEREAS, Rejuvenated by success first at Cantigny, and now at Chateau-Thierry, Second Division forces followed up Chateau-Thierry two days later with the difficult exercise of capturing Belleau Wood; and

WHEREAS, Second Division's Marine Corps, under James Harbord, were tasked with the taking of the wood; this perilous venture involved a murderous trek across an open wheat field, swept from end to end by German machine gun fire; and

WHEREAS, As a consequence of the open nature of the advance on the wood, casualties on the first day, June 6, 1918, were the highest in Marine Corps history; and

WHEREAS, Fiercely defended by the Germans, the Belleau Wood was first taken by the Marines and Third Infantry Brigade, then ceded back to the Germans, and again taken by the United States forces a total of six times before the Germans were finally expelled; also captured were the nearby villages of Vaux and Bouresche; and

WHEREAS, The battle ran for 20 long days, and by its end, the United States suffered 9,777 casualties, of which 1,811 were fatal; more critically, the combined Chateau-Thierry and Belleau Wood action brought to an end the last major German offensive of the war; and

WHEREAS, The banner of freedom will always wave over our beloved New York and all of America, 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 appreciation and eternal gratitude for their sacrifices and courageous acts; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 98th Anniversary of the Battle of Belleau Wood on June 25, 2016; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, New Windsor, New York.