

2019-K562

Assembly Resolution No. 562

BY: M. of A. Hawley

HONORING United States Army Staff Sergeant David Bellavia upon the occasion of his designation as a recipient of the Medal of Honor

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

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to honor United States Army Staff Sergeant David Bellavia upon the occasion of his designation as a recipient of the Medal of Honor for rescuing his squad and clearing out a house full of Iraqi insurgents during the Battle of Fallujah; and

WHEREAS, This meritorious veteran will be honored for his bravery by President Donald J. Trump in a ceremony at the White House on Tuesday, June 25, 2019, with his family and other members of his Army unit in attendance; and

WHEREAS, The prestigious Medal of Honor is the United States' highest military honor and enshrines recipients in the history of our Nation; and

WHEREAS, Born on November 10, 1975, David "Bell" Bellavia was raised in Waterport, New York, where he grew up listening to stories from his grandfather, a World War II veteran; after attending Franklin Pierce College in Rindge, New Hampshire, and the University at Buffalo, he enlisted in the United States Army in July of 1999; and

WHEREAS, After serving in Kosovo, David Bellavia was deployed to Iraq; on November 10, 2004, Squad Leader David Bellavia exposed himself to enemy fire defending his soldiers during the Second Battle of Fallujah, Iraq; and

WHEREAS, Third Platoon, A Company, Task Force 2-2 was with U.S. Marines facing about 1,500 to 3,000 insurgents who had been using the mostly abandoned city as cover; A Company learned six to eight insurgents were hiding somewhere in a block of 12 buildings, and the company would have to search each one to try and find them; after unsuccessfully searching the first nine buildings, Platoon members entered the next structure and encountered heavy gunfire from within; and

WHEREAS, Squad Leader David Bellavia used his M249 squad automatic weapon to suppress and counter the insurgent attack, allowing Third Platoon members to escape the house; however, they began taking fire from insurgents on the house's rooftop; Staff Sergeant Bellavia, realizing the only way to keep his platoon from taking casualties was to eliminate the enemy, re-entered the house; and

WHEREAS, Squad Leader David Bellavia called for an M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle to provide suppressing fire with its 25 mm cannon as he

headed inside; he then fought his way up three floors, using his rifle and grenades to kill four enemy insurgents and mortally wound another;

the first insurgent Staff Sergeant Bellavia killed had been loading an RPG launcher to fire upon the Third Platoon; and

WHEREAS, Squad Leader David Bellavia's actions ultimately saved three squads of Third Platoon; for his courageous actions during the firefight, he received the Silver Star; on June 7, 2019, he was informed his Silver Star would be upgraded to the Medal of Honor, making him the lone survivor of this esteemed award from the Iraq War; and

WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant David Bellavia also earned the Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal and the Army Achievement Medal; and

WHEREAS, Upon the completion of his military service in 2005, with the rank of Staff Sergeant, David Bellavia co-founded and served as Vice Chairman of Vets for Freedom; in 2006, he was an honored guest at the State of the Union address; and

WHEREAS, In 2007, David Bellavia published a memoir entitled House to House: An Epic Memoir of War, co-written with John R. Bruning; in September of 2010, the book was chosen as one of the top five best Iraq War memoirs by journalist Thomas Ricks; two years later, he signed an agreement with Oscar-winning producer Rich Middlemas to make his memoir into a major motion picture; and

WHEREAS, From late 2012 through October of 2013, David Bellavia served as the late-night host for WBEN; on October 31, 2016, he joined WBEN's Tom Bauerle as co-host Bauerle and Bellavia, a drive time talk show in Buffalo, New York; and

WHEREAS, Today, David Bellavia holds the title of President of EMPact America, an American energy resiliency organization based in Elma, New York, and is in the process of writing his second book; and

WHEREAS, In addition to these roles, David Bellavia has been a force in Western New York politics, serving as a candidate for New York's 26th and 27th Congressional district; and

WHEREAS, Residents of this great State must never forget the courage with which men and women like Staff Sergeant David Bellavia served their country; and

WHEREAS, Through his sacrifice, Staff Sergeant David Bellavia demonstrated his love for his country and this merits forevermore, the highest respect of this 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, and their Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Staff Sergeant David Bellavia upon the occasion of his designation as a recipient of the Medal of Honor; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Staff Sergeant David Bellavia.