

2021-J714

Senate Resolution No. 714

BY: Senator PALUMBO

MOURNING the death of John Behan, former New York State Assemblyman, Vietnam War veteran and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, Within every community of the State of New York there are certain individuals who, by virtue of their commitment and dedication, command the respect and admiration of their community for their exemplary contributions and service on behalf of others; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to mourn publicly those distinguished citizens who demonstrated great courage and diligence in providing for the care and welfare of the citizens of their communities and this great Empire State; and

WHEREAS, With feelings of deepest regret, this Legislative Body records the passing of John Behan who died on Friday, January 29, 2021, at the of 76; and

WHEREAS, Born and raised on Long Island, John Behan attended East Hampton High School where he served as president of his senior class; after graduating in 1963, he joined the United States Marine Corps and proudly served his country with the Sixth and Seventh Fleets before joining the First Marine Division for a tour of duty in Vietnam in 1965, where he lost both of his legs in combat; and

WHEREAS, For his meritorious service to the Marine Corps, John Behan was decorated seven times and received the Conspicuous Service Cross, New York State's highest military honor; and

WHEREAS, Upon his retirement from the military with the rank of Sergeant, John Behan determinedly learned to walk again with the use of artificial limbs, and after much hard work and drive, he turned to athletic competition and won gold medals in the javelin, and medaled in shotput, discus and as a member of the basketball team on the U.S. Wheelchair Olympics team in both 1972 and 1976; and

WHEREAS, John Behan also participated in the Fourth Pan American Games held in Peru and the first International Games for the Disabled held in Canada; and

WHEREAS, John Behan then began his long and distinguished career in politics, first as the East Hampton Town Assessor and then as New York State Assemblyman representing the South Fork area of Long Island in 1978; in this capacity, he tirelessly worked for various veteran's causes and organized a Vietnam Veterans Caucus, for which he received national recognition as State Legislature of the Year for his ardent support; and

WHEREAS, In addition, John Behan's tireless efforts led to the creation of the first Assembly Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, of which he became the ranking member; and

WHEREAS, In 1985, John Behan led the historic New York State Delegation to Vietnam and later that year, he led the "Welcome Home Parade to Vietnam Veterans" down the famed canyon of heroes alongside then New York City Mayor Ed Koch; and

WHEREAS, After 16 years of steadfast and unremitting commitment to his fellow veterans and constituents, he became the director of the State Division of Veterans Affairs under former Governor George E. Pataki; and

WHEREAS, John Behan is survived by his wife, Marilyn, their two sons, Jason and Jack, and one daughter, Bridget; and

WHEREAS, A man of great compassion and determination, John Behan's legacy extends far beyond his accomplishments as a successful public servant; his sincere concern for others; his integrity, unconditional friendship and selfless motivation to give of himself, will long stand as a beacon for those who would aspire to service in their community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of John Behan, former New York State Assemblyman, Vietnam War veteran and devoted member of his community, recognizing the significance of his exemplary record of public service; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of John Behan.