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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 258 Session of  
2019

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INTRODUCED BY MURT, BURGOS, SCHLOSSBERG, RABB, FRANKEL,  
DONATUCCI, READSHAW, JOHNSON-HARRELL, MILLARD, KINSEY,  
FREEMAN, SCHWEYER, SAINATO, HILL-EVANS AND McCLINTON,  
APRIL 25, 2019

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY  
PREPAREDNESS, APRIL 25, 2019

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A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Congress of the United States to create a task force  
2 to review the records of minority service members who served  
3 in World War I to determine if they were denied the Medal of  
4 Honor or other valor awards due to discrimination and create  
5 legislation that will lift statutes of limitations preventing  
6 this important and necessary review.

7 WHEREAS, Award reviews for minority service members of other  
8 wartime engagements have been conducted by the United States  
9 military; and

10 WHEREAS, Each branch of the armed services of the United  
11 States has regulations in place that permit no margin of error  
12 in deciding whether a service member is deserving of the Medal  
13 of Honor; and

14 WHEREAS, The act committed by the service member must have  
15 conspicuously distinguished the service member by gallantry and  
16 intrepidity at the risk of their life above and beyond the call  
17 of duty in the following situations:

18 (1) while engaged in an action against an enemy of the

1 United States;

2 (2) while engaged in military operations involving  
3 conflict with an opposing foreign force; or

4 (3) while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged  
5 in an armed conflict against an opposing force in which the  
6 United States is not a belligerent party;

7 and

8 WHEREAS, Two posthumous Medal of Honor bestowals to Corporal  
9 Freddie Stowers and Sergeant Henry Johnson, challenge the claims  
10 of there being no black and few other minority Medal of Honor  
11 recipients; and

12 WHEREAS, Minorities who served with valor during World War I  
13 deserve our due diligence in acknowledging their service; and

14 WHEREAS, Of the 225 Medal of Honor awards presented to World  
15 War I service members, only two were awarded to African-American  
16 service members and one was awarded to a Hispanic-American  
17 service member; and

18 WHEREAS, The American Legion, along with volunteers, is  
19 planning to review the records of approximately 70 African-  
20 American service members who may have been denied the Medal of  
21 Honor or other valor awards; and

22 WHEREAS, Of those 70 African-American service members, eight  
23 were nominated for a Medal of Honor; and

24 WHEREAS, The eight African-American service members had been  
25 nominated for the award because their chain of command knew that  
26 they committed an act that conspicuously distinguished  
27 themselves by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their  
28 life above and beyond the call of duty; and

29 WHEREAS, Although their chain of command felt that they  
30 distinguished themselves beyond the call of duty, none of those

1 eight African-American nominees were awarded the Medal of Honor  
2 until the 1990s; and

3 WHEREAS, Of the eight African-American nominees, only two  
4 were awarded the Medal of Honor, posthumously, in 1991 and 2015  
5 after prior valor award reviews; and

6 WHEREAS, Researchers at Park University in Parkville,  
7 Missouri, are reviewing the records of approximately 40,000  
8 African-American troops who fought in combat during World War I;  
9 and

10 WHEREAS, In addition to the African-American troops of World  
11 War I, Park University researchers plan to eventually look into  
12 the records of other minority groups, including Asian Americans,  
13 Hispanic Americans, Jewish Americans and Native Americans; and

14 WHEREAS, At the time of consideration, the award criteria was  
15 race-neutral when determining whether the service member  
16 qualified for the particular valor award; and

17 WHEREAS, Due to prejudices and racial discrimination, many  
18 minorities were not granted the same considerations for a valor  
19 award when reviewing their actions and bravery during their  
20 service in World War I; and

21 WHEREAS, It is important and necessary to research and  
22 rightfully award minority service members valor awards for their  
23 distinguished service during which they risked their lives and  
24 went above and beyond the call of duty, reflecting honorably on  
25 their units, the United States Armed Forces and their country;  
26 and

27 WHEREAS, The American Legion adopted Resolution 109 in 2018  
28 requesting legislation that would lift the statutes of  
29 limitations preventing proper review of the records of minority  
30 service members for their consideration of valor awards for

1 their service in World War I; therefore be it

2       RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the  
3 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania urge the Congress of the United  
4 States to create a task force to review the records of minority  
5 service members who served in World War I to determine if they  
6 were denied the Medal of Honor or other valor awards due to  
7 discrimination and create legislation that will lift statutes of  
8 limitations preventing this important and necessary review; and  
9 be it further

10       RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to  
11 the President of the United States, the presiding officers of  
12 each house of Congress and to each member of Congress from  
13 Pennsylvania.