

Introduced by Senator Wolk

(Coauthors: Senators Block, Correa, Evans, Lieu, Price, Roth, and Wright)

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Bonilla, Bonta, Bradford, Brown, Ian Calderon, Frazier, Hall, Holden, Jones-Sawyer, Mitchell, Muratsuchi, Patterson, Weber, and Yamada)

May 20, 2013

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 45—Relative to the Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Highway.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 45, as introduced, Wolk. Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate the portion of Interstate 80 between Midway Road and the State Route 12 interchange in the County of Solano as the Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Highway to honor the Tuskegee Airmen and the contributions they made during World War II. The measure would request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost for appropriate signs showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those signs.

Fiscal committee: yes.

- 1 WHEREAS, Despite adversity and limited opportunities, African
- 2 Americans have played a significant role in United States military
- 3 history over the past 300 years. They were denied military
- 4 leadership roles and skilled training because many people believed
- 5 they lacked the qualifications for combat duty; and
- 6 WHEREAS, Before 1940, African Americans were barred from
- 7 flying for the United States military, but civil rights organizations

1 and the black press exerted pressure that resulted in what became
2 known as the “Tuskegee Experiment”; and

3 WHEREAS, On January 16, 1941, the War Department
4 announced the formation of the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the first
5 African American flying unit in the United States Army Air Corps,
6 that trained at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, and
7 which became known as the “Lonely Eagles,” who fought in the
8 Mediterranean and European Theaters; and

9 WHEREAS, For every African American pilot there were 10
10 other African Americans, including navigators, bombardiers,
11 maintenance and support staff, instructors, and all the personnel
12 who keep airplanes in the air; and

13 WHEREAS, On March 7, 1942, the first class of African
14 American pilots at Tuskegee Army Air Field, 42-C, completed
15 advanced pilot training. There were only five who completed the
16 training: Captain Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. and 2nd Lieutenants Mac
17 Ross, Lemuel R. Custis, Charles H. DeBow, Jr., and George S.
18 Roberts. Captain Davis was assigned to the base, and the other
19 four became the first African American flying officers in the 99th
20 Pursuit Squadron; and

21 WHEREAS, The squadron was quickly dubbed the “Tuskegee
22 Airmen” and redesignated the 99th Fighter Squadron on May 15,
23 1942, and assigned to the 332nd Fighter Group, for which they
24 later served as a bomber escort group that famously never lost a
25 single bomber to enemy fighters. No other escort unit claimed such
26 a record. The 332nd Fighter Group was later expanded to include
27 the 99th, 100th, 301st, and 302nd Fighter Squadrons; and

28 WHEREAS, In June 1943, the Tuskegee Airmen entered into
29 combat over North Africa. The Tuskegee Airmen exemplified
30 courage, skill, and dedication in combat. They flew P-39-, P-40-,
31 P-47- and P-51-type single-seat fighter aircraft on more than 15,000
32 sorties, completing over 1,500 missions during the war; and

33 WHEREAS, On July 2, 1943, Lieutenant Charles B. Hall scored
34 the 99th Fighter Squadron’s first aerial victory. Never before had
35 an African American fighter pilot in the United States Armed
36 Forces shot down an enemy aircraft; and

37 WHEREAS, The new mission of the 332nd Fighter Group,
38 under the command of Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., was to
39 escort heavy bombers of the 15th Air Force on raids against
40 strategic enemy targets in southern and central Europe; and

1 WHEREAS, During July 1944, the Tuskegee Airmen downed
2 36 enemy aircraft, the most they ever scored in a single month,
3 and had begun flying the P-51 Mustang, which was faster and
4 more maneuverable than the previous types of fighter aircraft that
5 the group had flown from their base at Ramitelli Airfield in Italy;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, During World War II, 72 Tuskegee Airmen shot
8 down a total of 112 enemy aircraft, including the first German jet
9 fighters. The Tuskegee Airmen proved beyond a shadow of a doubt
10 that African Americans were capable of flying the best of the Allied
11 fighters to victory against the best of the enemy fighters. They
12 earned an indelible place in the history of air combat and in the
13 history of their country and of the world; and

14 WHEREAS, On May 11, 1945, three days after Germany
15 surrendered, the 332nd Fighter Group assembled for a ceremony
16 in which Major General Nathan F. Twining, commander of the
17 15th Air Force, presented various honors, including the
18 Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and the Bronze Star,
19 to various members of the 332nd Fighter Group; and

20 WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen destroyed over 1,000 enemy
21 aircraft, received more than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses,
22 and lost so few Allied bomber aircraft to enemy fighters when
23 flying escort missions that they earned the title “Red Tail Angels”
24 from the bomber crews who would specifically request the 332nd
25 Fighter Group as their escort; and

26 WHEREAS, On November 6, 1998, President Clinton approved
27 Public Law 105-355, which established the Tuskegee Airmen
28 National Historic Site at Moton Field in Tuskegee, Alabama, to
29 commemorate and interpret the heroic actions of the Tuskegee
30 Airmen during World War II. The site contains a museum and
31 interpretive programs at the historic complex at Moton Field as
32 well as a national center based on a public-private partnership;
33 now, therefore, be it

34 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
35 *thereof concurring,* That the Legislature hereby designates that
36 portion of Interstate 80 between Midway Road and the State Route
37 12 interchange in the County of Solano as the Tuskegee Airmen
38 Memorial Highway to honor the Tuskegee Airmen and the
39 contributions they made during World War II; and be it further

1 *Resolved*, That the Department of Transportation is requested
2 to determine the cost of erecting appropriate signs, consistent with
3 the signing requirements for the state highway system, showing
4 this special designation and, upon receiving donations from
5 nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those signs; and be it
6 further

7 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
8 of this resolution to the Department of Transportation and to the
9 author for appropriate distribution.

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