

AMENDED IN SENATE JUNE 5, 2013

Senate Concurrent Resolution

No. 45

Introduced by Senator Wolk

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

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Bonilla, Bonta, Bradford, Brown, ~~Ian Calderon~~, *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 amended, Wolk. Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate the portion of Interstate 80 between Midway Road and the State Route 12 *East* 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

1 WHEREAS, Before 1940, African Americans were barred from
2 flying for the United States military, but civil rights organizations
3 and the black press exerted pressure that resulted in what became
4 known as the “Tuskegee Experiment”; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 WHEREAS, On May 11, 1945, three days after Germany
19 surrendered, the 332nd Fighter Group assembled for a ceremony
20 in which Major General Nathan F. Twining, commander of the
21 15th Air Force, presented various honors, including the
22 Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and the Bronze Star,
23 to various members of the 332nd Fighter Group; and

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

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

38 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
39 *thereof concurring,* That the Legislature hereby designates that
40 portion of Interstate 80 between Midway Road and the State Route

1 12 *East* interchange in the County of Solano as the Tuskegee
2 Airmen Memorial Highway to honor the Tuskegee Airmen and
3 the contributions they made during World War II; and be it further
4 *Resolved*, That the Department of Transportation is requested
5 to determine the cost of erecting appropriate signs, consistent with
6 the signing requirements for the state highway system, showing
7 this special designation and, upon receiving donations from
8 nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those signs; and be it
9 further

10 *Resolved*, That the ~~Chief Clerk of the Assembly~~ *Secretary of*
11 *the Senate* transmit copies of this resolution to the ~~Department~~
12 *Director* of Transportation and to the author for appropriate
13 distribution.