

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 25

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 72

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 25—Relative to the Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone Memorial Freeway.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 23, 1999.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 25, Morrow. Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone Memorial Freeway.

This measure would designate a specified portion of Interstate 5 the "Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone Memorial Freeway." The measure also 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.

WHEREAS, Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone was born in 1916 in Buffalo, New York, son of Salvatore and Dora Basilone, one of 10 children; and

WHEREAS, John Basilone was raised and educated in Raritan, New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, At the age of 18, in 1934, John Basilone enlisted in the United States Army, principally seeing garrison service in the Philippines; and

WHEREAS, While stationed in Manila, Sergeant Basilone was a Golden Gloves light-heavyweight boxing champion and, while there, he met the great love of his life, the .30-caliber machine gun; and

WHEREAS, After his honorable discharge in 1937, Sergeant Basilone, known by his comrades as "Manila John," returned to Raritan; and

WHEREAS, He saw the storm clouds of war hovering over the nation, and believing his place was with the fighting forces, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in July 1940; and

WHEREAS, On October 24 and 25, 1942, on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, Sergeant Basilone was a member of "C" Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Regiment, 1st Marine Division, one of "Chesty" Puller's Battalions, and was in charge of two sections of heavy machine guns defending a narrow pass that led to Henderson Airfield; and

WHEREAS, Although Sergeant Basilone and his machine gunners were vastly outnumbered without available reinforcements, Sergeant Basilone and his fellow Marines fought valiantly to check

the savage and determined assault by the Japanese Imperial Army; and

WHEREAS, In a fierce frontal attack with the enemy blasting his division with grenades and mortar fire, one of Sergeant Basilone's sections, with its gun crews, was put out of action, leaving only two men to carry on, Sergeant Basilone moved an extra gun into position and, under continual fire, repaired another gun and personally manned it; and

WHEREAS, A short time later, with the ammunition critically low and supply lines cut off, Sergeant Basilone, at great risk to his life and in the face of continued enemy attack, battled his way through hostile lines with urgently needed shells for his gunners; and

WHEREAS, Hour after hour Sergeant Basilone and his remaining men battled the Japanese forces, and at one point he was forced to use his revolver to shoot down enemy soldiers who had reached his trench; and

WHEREAS, By the time reinforcements arrived, the enemy had been stopped; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Basilone's small force had contributed in large measure to the virtual annihilation of an enemy regiment; and

WHEREAS, For this action, Sergeant Basilone was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and sent home a hero; and

WHEREAS, John Basilone married his sweetheart, Lena Mae Riggi, who, with love and devotion, encouraged her husband of one month to follow his heart; and

WHEREAS, In December 1944, Sergeant Basilone's restlessness to rejoin his fellow Marines who were fighting the bloody island-to-island battles in route to the Philippines and Japan prompted him to again volunteer for combat; and

WHEREAS, On Iwo Jima, February 19, 1945, Sergeant Basilone again distinguished himself, single-handedly destroying an enemy blockhouse while braving a smashing bombardment of enemy heavy caliber fire, putting the blockhouse out of commission; and

WHEREAS, Minutes later an artillery shell killed Sergeant Basilone and four of his platoon members; and

WHEREAS, He was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross and Purple Heart, and a life-sized bronze statue stands in Raritan, New Jersey where "Manila John" is clad in battle dress and cradles in his arms a machine gun; and

WHEREAS, In 1949 the United States Government commissioned a destroyer U.S.S. Basilone, and in November 1951, Governor Alfred E. Driscoll posthumously awarded Sergeant Basilone the State of New Jersey's highest decoration; and

WHEREAS, Following World War II, Sergeant Basilone's remains were reinterred in the Arlington National Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Basilone was the first recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor awarded in World War II; and



WHEREAS, Sergeant Basilone was also awarded the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart, giving him the distinction of being the only enlisted Marine in World War II to receive all three medals; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby designates the 17-mile portion of Interstate 5 between the Basilone Road exit at the north and the main gate of Camp Pendleton at the south, the “Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone Memorial Freeway,” in honor and in recognition of John Basilone; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of Transportation is requested to determine the cost of appropriate plaques and markers, consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system, showing this special designation, and indicating that Sergeant Basilone was a United States Marine, and upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those plaques and markers; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the Director of Transportation and to the author for distribution.

