

Whereas, a significant portion of these claims involve World War II and Korean War veterans, and despite determined efforts by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to eliminate this backlog, the backlog continues; and

Whereas, there exists a trained group of individuals known as county veterans service officers located in 37 of the 50 states, representing 700 counties and a workforce of over 2,400 full-time local government employees; and

Whereas, these county veterans service officers were established in 1945 after World War II for the purpose of helping returning veterans reenter civilian life, and have continued to do so for all veterans of all wars since then; and

Whereas, these county veterans service officers are highly trained individuals who have continued to provide assistance to all veterans for over 50 years and are already familiar with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs claim policies and procedures; and

Whereas, for example, in North Carolina county veterans service officers annually assist North Carolina veterans obtain monetary benefits in excess of \$812,000,000 by assisting these veterans in filing over 50,000 claims annually with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs; and

Whereas, this claims processing backlog needs to be urgently reduced while our World War II and Korean War veterans are still with us; and

Whereas, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs could enter into a partnership with state and local governments to utilize these highly trained county veterans service officers to eliminate the present claims processing backlog by expanding the county veterans service officers' roles; and

Whereas, this would be a cost-effective way of reducing the claims processing backlog by eliminating the need for a substantial increase in federal employees; and

Whereas, these county veterans service officers, as represented by the North Carolina Association of County Veterans Service Officers and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, have offered to assist the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in exchange for block grants to the various states based upon each state's veterans population to compensate county veterans service officers for their expanded role; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives:

Section 1. The House of Representatives urges the Congress of the United States and the President to support and enact legislation that would establish a federal/state partnership to use the knowledge and skills of the local county veterans service officers to assist the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in eliminating the veterans claims processing backlog in order that America's veterans can take advantage of the benefits that the United States has authorized for them for their faithful and loyal service to a grateful nation.

Section 2. The Principal Clerk shall transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from North Carolina in the Congress of the United States.

Section 3. This resolution is effective upon adoption.

POM-334. A Resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Alaska relative to the Pledge of Allegiance; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SENATE RESOLVE NO. 2

Whereas this country was founded on religious freedom by founders, many of whom were deeply religious; and

Whereas the First Amendment to the United States Constitution embodies principles intended to guarantee freedom of religion both through the free exercise of religion and by prohibiting the government's establishing a religion; and

Whereas the Pledge of Allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy, a Baptist minister, and was first published in the September 8, 1892, issue of *Youth's Companion*; and

Whereas, in 1954, the United States Congress added the words "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance; and

Whereas President Eisenhower, in adding these words, said "These words will remind Americans that despite our great physical strength we must remain humble. They will help us to keep constantly in our minds and hearts the spiritual and moral principles which alone give dignity to man, and upon which our way of life is founded."; and

Whereas, for nearly 50 years, the Pledge of Allegiance has included references to the United States flag and the country; this country, has been established as a union, "under God" being dedicated to securing "liberty and justice for all"; and

Whereas, in 1954, the United States Congress believed it was acting constitutionally when it revised the Pledge of Allegiance; and

Whereas the Senate of the 107th United States Congress believes that the Pledge of Allegiance is not an unconstitutional expression of patriotism; and

Whereas patriotic songs, engravings on United States legal tender, engravings on federal buildings, and the Preamble to the Constitution of the State of Alaska also contain general references to "God"; and

Whereas, in accordance with decisions of the United States Supreme Court, public school students cannot be forced to recite the Pledge of Allegiance without violating their First Amendment rights; and

Whereas the Congress expects that the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit will rehear the case of *Newdow v. U.S. Congress*, en banc, and resolves to instruct the Senate Legal Counsel to seek to intervene in the case to defend the constitutionality of the Pledge of Allegiance; be it

Resolved, That the Alaska State Senate concurs with and supports the United States Senate in challenging the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in its decision of *Newdow v. U.S. Congress*, en banc.

POM-355. A Resolution adopted by the Senate of the State of Texas relative to bestowing the Congressional Medal of Honor to a citizen of the State of Texas; to the Committee on Armed Services.

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 1206

Whereas, World War II hero Doris "Dorie" Miller exhibited unparalleled courage during the attack on Pearl Harbor, and this bravery has not received the just honors and recognition it merits; and

Whereas, A native Texan, Dorie was born in Waco in 1919 and enlisted in the United States Navy in 1939; and

Whereas, Dorie's ship, the USS *West Virginia* was among those attacked in the early morning of December 7, 1941; and

Whereas, With little regard for his own personal safety, the 22-year-old Dorie assisted his mortally wounded captain out of the line of fire to shelter; and

Whereas, While struggling back to the bridge amid heavy fire and detonating bombs, Dorie came upon a machine gun whose gunner had been killed; although Dorie had never been trained to use the weapon, he began firing at the Japanese planes with telling effect and continued firing until the crew was ordered to abandon the ship; and

Whereas, For his heroism on board the *West Virginia*, Dorie Miller received the Navy

Cross, the United States Navy's highest honor, from Admiral Chester Nimitz during a ceremony on the flight deck of the USS *Enterprise* at Pearl Harbor on May 27, 1942; Dorie was the first African American to receive the award; and

Whereas, Later assigned to the USS *Liscome Bay* in the Pacific, Dorie was on board on November 24, 1943, when the light aircraft carrier was sunk by a submarine; 272 sailors survived but 646 were lost, and Dorie was officially presumed dead a year and a day after the carrier went down; and

Whereas, Citizens across the State of Texas believe that Dorie Miller should be awarded the highest honor that a member of the United States Armed Forces can receive, the Congressional Medal of Honor; a man of great gallantry, Dorie Miller is entitled to the respect and gratitude of our nation; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 77th Legislature, hereby respectfully request the Congress of the United States of America to bestow on Doris Miller the Congressional Medal of Honor; and, be it further

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. JEFFORDS, from the Committee on Environment and Public Works, without amendment:

H.R. 2595: A bill to direct the Secretary of the Army to convey a parcel of land to Chat-ham County, Georgia.

H.R. 4044: To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide assistance to the State of Maryland and the State of Louisiana for implementation of a program to eradicate or control nutria and restore marshland damaged by nutria.

H.R. 4727: A bill to reauthorize the national dam safety program, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following executive reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. KENNEDY for the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

*Glenn Bernard Anderson, of Arkansas, to be a Member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2002.

*Barbara Gillcrist, of New Mexico, to be a Member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2002.

*Graham Hill, of Virginia, to be a Member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2002.

*Marco A. Rodriguez, of California, to be a Member of the National Council on Disability for a term expiring September 17, 2002.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first