

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 440 Session of 2019

INTRODUCED BY JOHNSON-HARRELL, DONATUCCI, HOHENSTEIN, KORTZ, BARRAR, JONES, RABB, FRANKEL, HARRIS, POLINCHOCK, MILLARD, McCLINTON, KINSEY, SHUSTERMAN, KOSIEROWSKI, DIGIROLAMO, WILLIAMS, BIZZARRO, HILL-EVANS, MURT, COX, FREEMAN, WHEATLEY, YOUNGBLOOD, JOZWIAK, CALTAGIRONE, READSHAW, SAINATO, NEILSON AND HOWARD, SEPTEMBER 3, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, SEPTEMBER 3, 2019

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring African-American World War II Army Staff Sergeant
2 Waverly Woodson, Jr., on the 75th anniversary of D-Day for
3 his heroic actions as a corporal and combat medic on Omaha
4 Beach on June 6, 1944.

5 WHEREAS, This year marks the 75th anniversary of D-Day, a
6 turning point in World War II, when more than 160,000 Allied
7 troops invaded Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944, to fight Nazi
8 Germany and liberate Europe from its grasp; and

9 WHEREAS, For decades, it was commonly believed that African-
10 American soldiers did not participate in D-Day, but this myth
11 has been proven to be untrue; and

12 WHEREAS, African-American soldiers not only fought on Omaha
13 Beach, the stretch of Normandy's coastline that saw the worst
14 fighting on D-Day, they played a key role in the invasion, yet
15 their stories remain largely untold; and

16 WHEREAS, One such soldier was Philadelphia-born Waverly

1 Woodson, Jr., a 21-year old corporal and medic with the 320th
2 Barrage Balloon Battalion, the only African-American combat unit
3 to storm the beaches of Normandy; and

4 WHEREAS, The 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, one of the
5 first units to land at Normandy, was tasked with deploying and
6 manning an aerial barrage of massive balloons to protect
7 American forces from German bomber planes; and

8 WHEREAS, Mr. Woodson's landing craft hit a mine on its way
9 onto Omaha Beach, which left him seriously wounded by burning
10 shrapnel, but despite his wounds, he further risked his life to
11 save the lives of his fellow soldiers; and

12 WHEREAS, Mr. Woodson worked tirelessly through searing pain
13 for more than 30 hours to remove bullets, patch gaping wounds,
14 dispense blood plasma, amputate limbs and resuscitate drowning
15 men before collapsing; and

16 WHEREAS, His heroic deeds on D-Day led the United States War
17 Department to recommend Mr. Woodson for the Congressional Medal
18 of Honor, our nation's highest military award given for valor;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, Mr. Woodson never received this recognition as the
21 institutionalized racism of that era kept African-American
22 soldiers from receiving the military's highest awards; and

23 WHEREAS, Instead of receiving the Congressional Medal of
24 Honor or the Distinguished Service Cross, Mr. Woodson was
25 awarded the Bronze Star, the military's fourth-highest honor,
26 and a Purple Heart; and

27 WHEREAS, Decades passed before Mr. Woodson learned that he
28 had been nominated for the Congressional Medal of Honor; and

29 WHEREAS, Due to the 1973 fire that destroyed millions of
30 military personnel files, Mr. Woodson was not among the seven

1 African-American World War II veterans who were belatedly
2 awarded the honor in 1997 by President Clinton; and

3 WHEREAS, Mr. Woodson never received the honor before his
4 passing in 2005, but his family and many others continue the
5 fight to ensure that his heroism on D-Day is no longer
6 overlooked and that he finally receive the Congressional Medal
7 of Honor; therefore be it

8 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives honor African-
9 American World War II Army Staff Sergeant Waverly Woodson, Jr.,
10 on the 75th anniversary of D-Day for his heroic actions as a
11 corporal and combat medic on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944; and be
12 it further

13 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives urge the Congress
14 of the United States to posthumously award Staff Sergeant
15 Woodson with the Congressional Medal of Honor for the valor he
16 showed on D-Day in working to save the lives of countless
17 American soldiers while he himself was wounded.