Chapter No. 2105
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SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 507

Originated in Senate Liz Walker Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 507

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION SALUTING THE HEROIC WORLD WAR II FIGHTER PILOT SERVICE OF FORMER BILOXI MAYOR JERRY O'KEEFE ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RECEIPT OF THE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

WHEREAS, hometown hero and former Biloxi Mayor Jeremiah "Jerry" O'Keefe was one of the youngest Americans at age 21 to become an Ace Fighter Pilot during World War II. He earned the "ace" designation by shooting down seven enemy planes in one week; and

WHEREAS, on June 5, 2015, he was presented the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal during a celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Homes; and

WHEREAS, only 1,447 Americans became Ace Fighter Pilots for shooting down five or more enemy planes in aerial combat during World Wars I and II, Korea or Vietnam. Jeffery O'Keefe, his son and President of Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Homes, said his father is one of only 72 aces still living to receive the medal, Congress' highest civilian award. The *Sun Herald* archives in

detail O'Keefe's achievements, which were also written up in *Time Magazine* and other national publications; and

WHEREAS, O'Keefe enlisted in the U.S. Navy after the attack on Pearl Harbor and served from 1942-1943. After attending Flight School, he became a Fighter Pilot with the U.S. Marine Corps from 1943-1945. A letter from the Secretary of the Navy praised his actions of April 22, 1945: "Flying his plane aggressively in two engagements against a total of more than 50 Japanese suicide dive bombers, First Lieutenant O'Keefe pressed home a series of bold attacks in the face of hostile fire to destroy five of the enemy aircraft. He became an Ace Fighter Pilot during his first combat fight over Okinawa"; and

WHEREAS, he flew a Corsair Fighter Plane and was a member of the Death Rattlers Fighter Squadron of the 2nd Marine Aircraft Division, one of the most decorated squadrons in World War II. The entire squadron shot down 16 enemy planes. On April 28, 1945, O'Keefe shot down two enemy planes bringing his total victories to seven which made him the highest-scoring Ace Fighter Pilot in Okinawa at the time; and

WHEREAS, Jerry O'Keefe went on to become a State Legislator, President of Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Home for decades and a Biloxi Mayor; and

WHEREAS, he was awarded the Navy Cross, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal and the Gold Star. He added the

Congressional Gold Medal for American Flying Aces to the collection; and

WHEREAS, Jerry O'Keefe's legacy is a strong and free America, and for this and for a lifetime of selfless service, a grateful state thanks him:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby salute the heroic World War II Fighter Pilot service of former Biloxi Mayor Jerry O'Keefe on the occasion of his receipt of the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal, and extend our commendation to Jerry and his family on this auspicious occasion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to Jerry O'Keefe, forwarded to the Biloxi City Council, and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
January 21, 2016

Tate Reeves

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
January 26, 2016

Philip Gunn

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES