

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 326

By Southerland

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Kiffin Yates Rockwell for meritorious service during World War I.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, thousands of Tennesseans continue this time-honored tradition of volunteerism through service in various branches of the American military; and

WHEREAS, Kiffin Yates Rockwell, a native of Newport and a son of Tennessee, served with courage and gallantry and deserves proper recognition for his heroism; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rockwell was born in Newport on September 20, 1892, and, with his brother, Paul, volunteered for duty following the outbreak of war in August of 1914; and

WHEREAS, the two Rockwell brothers sailed for France just days after war broke out and, in doing so, were embracing the volunteerism which has defined Tennesseans for generations and, on a more personal level for the Rockwells, were fulfilling a debt the brothers were raised believing America owed France for its role in aiding our fledgling country gain independence during the Revolutionary War; and

WHEREAS, Kiffin and Paul were admitted into the French Foreign Legion and were fighting on the front by October of 1914 and, during a magnificent charge from the trenches into German lines in May 1915, Kiffin Rockwell was wounded in battle; and

WHEREAS, following his wounding on the front lines, Kiffin Rockwell became one of the first members of the Lafayette Escadrille, a flying corps made up entirely of American volunteers; and

WHEREAS, though he had no flying experience prior to joining the Lafayette Escadrille, Mr. Rockwell proved to be an excellent aviator. His acumen enabled him to become one of the finest pilots of World War I, and his skills in the arena of aerial combat, an entirely new combat technique, became readily apparent to all; and

WHEREAS, over the next year, Kiffin Rockwell fought in thirty-four aerial battles, in which he displayed an incredible level of daring which, coupled with his cool, unassuming personality, made him the heart of the Escadrille and a source of inspiration to his comrades-in-arms; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rockwell is credited with being the first American to bring down a German plane in battle, and the French army recognized his bravery and dedication many times over, and even bestowed upon him the coveted Croix de Guerre; and

WHEREAS, Kiffin Rockwell died in combat in September 1916, whereupon he was lauded by Europe and the United States alike as a hero of the highest caliber; and

WHEREAS, Kiffin Rockwell performed his duties with the utmost skill, dedication, and professionalism, and his service can only be categorized as outstanding, so it is wholly fitting that the State of Tennessee recognize his heroism in battle, his dedication to serving the needs of a world during a time of war, and his unwavering commitment to his fellow soldiers; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Kiffin Yates Rockwell for his sterling service as a soldier and aviator during World War I, applaud his standing as a member of the French Foreign Legion and the Lafayette Escadrille, and memorialize him as a military hero of the highest caliber and a pioneer of aerial combat. His service during the First World War is a testament of his bravery and valor, and the State of Tennessee is proud to commend this native son.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.