

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 113

By Lundberg

A RESOLUTION relative to the placement of an appropriate monument in the State Capitol building to honor Vice Admiral William Porter Lawrence.

WHEREAS, Vice Admiral William Porter Lawrence of Nashville was one of Tennessee's most notable native sons, a true American hero, and the author of the State Poem, "Oh Tennessee, My Tennessee"; and

WHEREAS, Vice Admiral William Lawrence proudly served this nation with the utmost courage and dedication; he exemplified a lifetime of inspirational leadership, personal bravery, and loyalty to his country; and

WHEREAS, born in Nashville on January 13, 1930, William Porter Lawrence graduated first in his class at West High School, where he was president of the student body and ranking officer of the ROTC; and

WHEREAS, attending the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, Vice Admiral Lawrence played three varsity sports, served as class president, Commander of the Brigade of Midshipmen, and graduated with distinction in 1951, ranked 8th out of 725 academically; and

WHEREAS, while at Annapolis, Vice Admiral Lawrence developed the honor concept for the Brigade of Midshipmen, the present-day Brigade Honor Concept, which is a key element in Midshipman moral development; and

WHEREAS, earning his wings in November of 1952, Vice Admiral William Lawrence served in the following fighter squadrons: VF-193, VF-101, VF-14, and VF-143. He was sent on deployments to both the Atlantic and Pacific on seven different aircraft carriers, flying 25 combat missions in Korea and 152 combat missions in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, an extraordinary pilot with razor-sharp skills, William P. Lawrence placed first in his class at Naval Test Pilot School in 1956 and was the first naval aviator to fly twice the speed of sound in a Navy plane, the F8U "Crusader III"; he also flew in the missing man formation at the funeral of President John F. Kennedy in 1963; and

WHEREAS, stationed at Patuxent River Naval Air Station in Maryland as a test pilot, Vice Admiral Lawrence was nominated by the Navy for Project Mercury, but a minor congenital heart valve problem denied Vice Admiral Lawrence his certain future as one of America's first astronauts; and

WHEREAS, Vice Admiral William P. Lawrence showed remarkable courage while serving in Vietnam as his jet was shot down over enemy territory, resulting in his capture by the North Vietnamese and his imprisonment in the infamous Hoa Lo Prison, the "Hanoi Hilton"; and

WHEREAS, a source of strength to his fellow captives, one of whom was fellow Navy pilot and future United States Senator John McCain, Vice Admiral Lawrence was the senior-ranking officer during his six years at Camp Vegas, the soldiers' official name for that prison, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his courage and strength under duress; and

WHEREAS, Vice Admiral Lawrence, after a sixty-day stay in solitary confinement while a prisoner of war, composed "Oh Tennessee, My Tennessee," which was designated and adopted as the Official State Poem by the Eighty-Eighth Tennessee General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, after his return from Vietnam, Vice Admiral Lawrence attended the National War College, where he was designated a distinguished graduate, and earned a master's degree in international affairs at George Washington University; and

WHEREAS, continuing to serve our nation, Vice Admiral William Lawrence was then appointed to the post of Assistant Deputy Chief of Naval Operations before being named Commander of the United States Third Fleet in the Pacific; and

WHEREAS, Vice Admiral Lawrence later returned to the Naval Academy, serving as Superintendent from 1978 to 1981, a time when his daughter Wendy was among the first female

graduates of the Academy; she would later become the first woman naval aviator and Naval Academy graduate to fly in space, flying three times as a mission specialist on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's space shuttle; and

WHEREAS, following his term as Superintendent of the United States Naval Academy, Vice Admiral Lawrence worked as the Chief of Naval Personnel, and, after many years of honorable service to his country, he officially retired from the Navy in 1986; and

WHEREAS, in honor of his courageous military service, Vice Admiral Lawrence received numerous ribbons and awards, including the Distinguished Service Medal (four awards), the Silver Star (three awards), the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star with Combat V, the Purple Heart (two awards), the Air Medal (three awards), the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V" device (two awards), the Combat Action Ribbon, the Navy Unit Commendation with silver star, the Prisoner of War Medal, the National Defense Service Medal with bronze star, the Korean Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with three bronze stars, the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation, the United Nations Service Medal, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, Vice Admiral William P. Lawrence received the United States Naval Academy (USNA) Alumni Association's Distinguished Graduate Award in 2000; the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame's highest award, the Gold Medal; and the National Collegiate Athletic Association's highest honor, the Theodore Roosevelt Award; and

WHEREAS, Vice Admiral Lawrence also received the Navy League's Admiral Arleigh Burke Leadership Award, the State of Tennessee's Outstanding Achievement Award, the Liberty Bowl's Distinguished Service Award, the Military Chaplains Association's "Citizen of the Year" award, and the Harvard Business School Distinguished Speakers Program's "Outstanding Speaker of the Year" award; and

WHEREAS, in 1985, the United States Navy established the Vice Admiral William P. Lawrence Award, a trophy given annually to the most outstanding Air Traffic Control Maintenance Technician in the Navy, and in 2005, the United States Naval Academy dedicated the Vice Admiral William P. Lawrence "N" Room at the Navy and Marine Corps Memorial

Stadium in his honor, paying tribute to his contributions to the nation, the Navy, and the United States Naval Academy; and

WHEREAS, in honor of Vice Admiral Lawrence, the United States Naval Academy annually awards the Vice Admiral William P. Lawrence Ethics Essay Award and in 1982 established the Vice Admiral William P. Lawrence Award, a sword given annually to the most outstanding woman athlete at the Academy; and

WHEREAS, as a lasting tribute to the legacy of Vice Admiral William Porter Lawrence, who passed away in 2005, the United States Navy christened the USS *William P. Lawrence* (DDG 110) on April 17, 2010, in Mobile, Alabama. Built at the Ingalls Shipbuilding shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi, the ship is a guided-missile destroyer homeported at Naval Base San Diego, California; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his service to his country and this State, it is most appropriate that Vice Admiral William P. Lawrence, an exceptional serviceman, public servant, and proud Tennessean, should be memorialized by his home state, the great State of Tennessee; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that the State Capitol Commission is hereby requested to initiate the creation and placement of a monument to honor and commemorate Vice Admiral William Porter Lawrence of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Capitol Commission may request the Tennessee Arts Commission to sponsor a contest, which will be open to all interested artists, to select such a monument to honor Vice Admiral Lawrence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the monument should preferably be a bust bearing the likeness of Vice Admiral Lawrence and should be comparable in size to those busts currently on display in the State Capitol building.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Capitol Commission and the Tennessee Arts Commission shall be responsible for selecting the appropriate submission for such contest and determining the final choice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the selected monument shall be funded by specific state appropriation and shall be placed and displayed on the second floor of the State Capitol building.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Capitol Commission is also authorized to seek private donations to cover the cost of the monument and related expenses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to both the State Capitol Commission and the Tennessee Arts Commission.