ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION
No. 74

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 3, 2020

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman LINDA S. CARTER
District 22 (Middlesex, Somerset and Union)
Assemblyman JOHN DIMAIO
District 23 (Hunterdon, Somerset and Warren)
Assemblyman ERIK PETERSON
District 23 (Hunterdon, Somerset and Warren)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblyman Bergen

SYNOPSIS

Designates September 22 as “John Basilone Day.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

A JOINT RESOLUTION designating September 22 of each year as "John Basilone Day."

WHEREAS, John Basilone was raised in Raritan, New Jersey when he left to enlist in the United States Army at age 17; and

WHEREAS, Basilone was honorably discharged from the army and began work as a truck driver before enlisting with the United States Marine Corps in 1940, a year before the United States entered World War II; and

WHEREAS, At the Battle of Guadalcanal, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone commanded two heavy machine gun sections charged with defending Henderson Field, a key Allied airstrip on the Solomon Islands; and

WHEREAS, With one machine gun post destroyed by Japanese forces, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone raced 200 yards with a 90 pound machine gun in hand to secure a faltering line; and

WHEREAS, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone also ran through enemy gunfire and between nearby machine gun posts repairing weapons and resupplying fellow Marines with ammunition; and

WHEREAS, Successfully defending Henderson Field during the Battle of Guadalcanal was a turning point for Allied forces as it established their air superiority in the region and provided a significant advantage in future engagements; and

WHEREAS, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions at Henderson Field; and

WHEREAS, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone was then sent back to the United States where he was given a hero's welcome; and

WHEREAS, The Marine Corps subsequently placed Gunnery Sergeant Basilone on a nationwide war bonds tour which ultimately yielded $1.4 million pledged to the war effort; and

WHEREAS, With a strong desire to return to combat, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone requested reassignment and was sent to Iwo Jima where he freed a group of Marines trapped on the beach, led their assault of an enemy guard post, and helped an Allied tank navigate through a minefield; and

WHEREAS, As he initiated another attack, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone was struck by mortar fire and succumbed to his wounds on the first day of battle; and

WHEREAS, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart for his actions at Iwo Jima; and

WHEREAS, Today Gunnery Sergeant Basilone's heroism and sacrifice are recognized in cities and towns across the country and at various United States military installations; and

WHEREAS, HBO honored Gunnery Sergeant Basilone in its 2010 miniseries "The Pacific" which portrayed the experiences of

American servicemen fighting in the Pacific Theater during World War II; and

WHEREAS, Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone is the only member of the armed forces to earn both the Congressional Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross, the nation's two highest military honors, for his actions during World War II; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. September 22 of each year is designated as "John Basilone Day" in the State of New Jersey to honor the extraordinary heroism displayed by New Jersey native John Basilone at the Battles of Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima during World War II.

2. The Governor is respectfully requested to issue an annual proclamation calling upon public officials and citizens of this State to observe "John Basilone Day" with appropriate activities and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This joint resolution designates September 22 of each year as "John Basilone Day" to honor the extraordinary heroism displayed by New Jersey native John Basilone at the Battles of Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima during World War II. This resolution also respectfully requests that the Governor issue an annual proclamation calling upon public officials and citizens of this State to observe the day with appropriate activities and programs.

On October 24, 1942, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone, along with two other machine gun units, were tasked with defending a key Allied landing strip from Japanese forces at the Battle of Guadalcanal. As these Marines engaged with enemy forces, one of their machine gun posts fell victim to enemy gunfire. Recognizing the danger this posed to the remaining men and with total disregard for his own life, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone raced nearly 200 yards carrying a 90-pound machine gun to reinforce the faltering line. Gunnery Sergeant Basilone also ran through enemy gunfire repairing nearby machine gun posts and resupplying his men with ammunition. After three days without any food or sleep, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone and two other Marines held off the Japanese attack until reinforcements arrived. It was the efforts of these men, in addition to the thousands of other American troops fighting in the region, which helped ensure a crucial victory for Allied forces in the Pacific Theater.

For his actions, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and returned to the United States where he was given a hero's welcome. To assist in the financing of the war, he then embarked on a nationwide tour encouraging people across the country to purchase war bonds. Despite being offered the opportunity to spend the rest of the war as an officer stateside, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone refused and requested a return to combat. He was then sent to train with a Marine unit for an invasion of the island of Iwo Jima.

On February 19, 1945, Gunnery Sergeant Basilone landed at Iwo Jima where he freed a group of Marines trapped on the beach, led their assault of an enemy guard post, and helped an Allied tank navigate an enemy minefield. As he prepared another attack, he was struck by mortar fire and succumbed to his injuries on the first day of battle. Gunnery Sergeant Basilone was again recognized for his heroic actions and posthumously awarded the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart. At the conclusion of World War II, his body was brought back to the United States and reburied with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. Today, he remains the only member of the armed forces to have earned both the Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross.

The State of New Jersey is proud to recognize Gunnery Sergeant Basilone's extraordinary service to our country and encourages the people of New Jersey to take time to learn about such a remarkable figure in our State's history.