

By: Lopez

H.C.R. No. 71

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, Marcelino Serna was one of the most decorated
2 military veterans in Texas history, and his heroic actions during
3 World War I make him a worthy candidate for the Congressional Medal
4 of Honor, our nation's highest military award; and

5 WHEREAS, Born in Chihuahua, Mexico, in 1896, Mr. Serna came
6 to the United States as a young man and spent time in Texas, Kansas,
7 and Colorado; after the United States entered World War I in 1917,
8 he enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 20, and after only three
9 weeks of training, he was shipped overseas with the 355th Infantry,
10 89th Division; when his superior officers in France learned that he
11 was not a U.S. citizen, they gave him the opportunity to return
12 home, but Private Serna chose to stay and fight; and

13 WHEREAS, Private Serna demonstrated exceptional
14 resourcefulness and courage on the battlefield; during an
15 engagement near the French town of St. Mihiel, 12 members of his
16 unit were hit by fire from an enemy machine gun, and Private Serna
17 obtained permission from his lieutenant to scout out the gun
18 emplacement on his own; moving through heavy fire, and surviving
19 two rounds that were deflected by his helmet, he tossed four hand
20 grenades into the machine gun nest, killing six of the enemy; he
21 then took the eight survivors captive; and

22 WHEREAS, Shortly thereafter, during the Meuse-Argonne
23 campaign, Private Serna embarked on a second lone scouting mission;
24 he began by wounding a German sniper with a shot from 200 yards,

1 then followed the injured man into a trench; firing and hurling
2 grenades in all directions to make it seem as if he were part of a
3 larger force, he shot three German soldiers immediately, then
4 attacked an enemy dugout, felling 26 more and capturing 24; he
5 single-handedly held the prisoners at gunpoint until other members
6 of his unit arrived; and

7 WHEREAS, Private Serna continued to serve in combat until the
8 end of the war, receiving a wound in each leg, and while he was
9 recovering in a French hospital, he was presented with the
10 Distinguished Service Cross, our nation's second highest military
11 decoration, from the American commander in France, General John
12 J. Pershing; he also earned the World War I Victory Medal with five
13 stars, the Victory Medal with three campaign bars, the St. Mihiel
14 Medal, the Verdun Medal, and two Purple Hearts; he was further
15 decorated by the governments of France, Italy, and the United
16 Kingdom, receiving two French Croix de Guerre with Palm Medals, the
17 French Medaille Militaire, the French Commemorative Medal, the
18 British Medal of Honor, and the Italian Cross of Merit; and

19 WHEREAS, After returning to the United States, Mr. Serna
20 became a U.S. citizen in 1924 and settled in El Paso, where he
21 worked for the quartermaster at Fort Bliss; he was a charter member
22 of VFW Post No. 2753 and volunteered with veterans advocacy groups,
23 and when he died in 1992, he was buried with full military honors at
24 Fort Bliss; he was the most decorated Texas veteran of World War I,
25 winning every major military award short of the Congressional Medal
26 of Honor, and records indicate that he was denied that supreme honor
27 only because he was a Mexican American immigrant and did not know

1 enough English to be promoted; and

2 WHEREAS, Marcelino Serna volunteered to serve our nation in
3 combat before he was even a citizen, and he stayed to fight when he
4 might have gone home; his courageous battlefield actions during
5 World War I have been recognized with a host of illustrious
6 commendations, and he truly warrants the highest honor that can be
7 bestowed on a member of the armed forces of the United States; now,
8 therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED, That the 87th Legislature of the State of Texas
10 hereby respectfully urge the United States Congress to bestow on
11 Marcelino Serna the Congressional Medal of Honor; and, be it
12 further

13 RESOLVED, That the secretary of state forward official copies
14 of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the
15 secretary of the Navy, to the speaker of the House of
16 Representatives and the president of the Senate of the United
17 States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to
18 Congress with the request that this resolution be officially
19 entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of
20 the United States of America.