

By: Price

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R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, For thousands of members of the American armed
2 forces who have served in wartime, the heat of battle has been
3 followed by the hardships and challenges of life as a prisoner of
4 war; and

5 WHEREAS, Harsh conditions and psychological duress have been
6 the common condition of POWs, and often the degree of cruelty
7 inflicted has reached the level of atrocity; the history of this
8 country's military conflicts is replete with such infamous cases;
9 among the horrors that attended the American Civil War were the
10 Andersonville and Libby prison camps in the South and Elmira in the
11 North where, collectively, more than 16,000 prisoners died from a
12 lack of food, inadequate medical care, wretched sanitation, and
13 exposure to the elements; altogether, it is estimated that 56,000
14 men perished in Civil War prisons; and

15 WHEREAS, In World War II, the notorious Bataan Death March
16 followed on the heels of the surrender of 70,000 American and
17 Filipino troops to the Japanese Army on April 9, 1942; treatment of
18 those prisoners was so brutal that the Japanese officer initially
19 in command was later tried as a war criminal and executed; still
20 further misery awaited POWs in the Philippines; in late 1944, with
21 U.S. forces poised to recapture the islands, the Japanese Army
22 crammed more than 126,000 Allied prisoners into the holds of
23 merchant ships for the purpose of evacuation; many of those men died
24 as a result of fetid, horrifically overcrowded conditions and a

1 lack of food and water; in addition, over 21,000 Americans are
2 believed to have been killed or injured when the "hell ships"
3 carrying them were attacked by American planes and submarines; and

4 WHEREAS, American prisoner-of-war deaths during the Korean
5 War officially totaled more than 2,800, for a rate of over 40
6 percent; before the creation of permanent prison camps, many of
7 those captured died on death marches to temporary facilities;
8 casualties were especially high in the first two years of the war,
9 largely due to a lack of food, shelter, and medicine; prisoners also
10 suffered physical abuse, and there were reported cases of torture;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, U.S. troops captured during the Vietnam War were
13 kept in primitive conditions in South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Laos,
14 and Cambodia; the so-called "Hanoi Hilton" prison in North Vietnam
15 was the scene of repeated beatings and torture, while one out of
16 every three Americans taken prisoner by the Viet Cong died from
17 disease, injury, or execution; and

18 WHEREAS, In today's military, women are increasingly
19 assuming risks on a par with men; Army Specialist Shoshana Johnson,
20 of El Paso, became one of the first two female POWs of Operation
21 Iraqi Freedom on March 23, 2003, when her convoy was ambushed in
22 Nasiriya; wounded in both ankles, she was held captive with other
23 members of her group until they were rescued on April 13, 2003; and

24 WHEREAS, Those prisoners of war who have survived their
25 ordeal have continued to lead lives of service; among the most
26 prominent is Congressman Sam Johnson, of Plano, who was shot down
27 during his second tour of duty as a fighter pilot in the Vietnam War

1 and who subsequently spent nearly seven years as a POW in North
2 Vietnam; after retiring from a highly decorated 29-year career in
3 the United States Air Force, Sam Johnson served in the Texas House
4 of Representatives from 1985 to 1991, when he was elected to the
5 U.S. Congress; and

6 WHEREAS, During the Vietnam War, the plight of American
7 military personnel who were listed as being either captured or
8 missing in action gave rise to the creation of the POW/MIA flag;
9 depicting the silhouette of a man flanked by a watchtower and a
10 strand of barbed wire, the flag flies, at the direction of Congress,
11 over the White House, the Capitol, and other specified sites on the
12 occasion of six annual national observances, including
13 Independence Day and Veterans Day; and

14 WHEREAS, Our nation is fortunate to have sons and daughters
15 whose love of country leads them to join one of the uniformed
16 branches, yet we are aware that in answering their nation's call,
17 they assume enormous burdens and risks; to those who have known the
18 terrible rigors of prison camps while serving in this country's
19 behalf, Americans owe a profound debt and eternal tribute; now,
20 therefore, be it

21 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas
22 Legislature hereby commemorate April 9, 2011, as Former POW
23 Recognition Day and honor all Texans who have experienced life as a
24 prisoner of war for their immeasurable courage, commitment, and
25 sacrifice.