

By: Springer

H.R. No. 1924

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The life and sacrifice of U.S. Navy Lieutenant Wilma
2 Ledbetter, who died in the line of duty during the Korean War, were
3 honored at a ceremony at First United Methodist Church in
4 Chillicothe on March 14, 2015; and

5 WHEREAS, Born in Chillicothe on April 27, 1912, Wilma
6 Ledbetter attended Texas State College for Women and Central State
7 Teachers College in Edmond, Oklahoma, before changing her career
8 goal from teaching to nursing; she subsequently trained at the
9 Northwest Texas Hospital School of Nursing in Amarillo from 1936 to
10 1939; after working for a year as a nurse at the hospital, she
11 joined the staff at Charity Hospital in New Orleans, and during the
12 next two years she also continued her education at Louisiana State
13 University; she returned to Texas in 1942 and worked at
14 Brackenridge Hospital in Austin; and

15 WHEREAS, Answering her nation's call to duty during World War
16 II, Wilma Ledbetter joined the Navy Nurse Corps in July 1943, and
17 she served at naval hospitals in San Diego, Hawaii, and New Orleans
18 before being released from active duty in May 1946; the following
19 year, she returned to duty as a member of the Navy Reserve Nurse
20 Corps and was posted to Houston and then Nevada; in 1948, she was
21 commissioned a lieutenant in the Nurse Corps; she worked for a time
22 in Philadelphia, and when the Korean War broke out, she rejoined the
23 active Navy Nurse Corps; and

24 WHEREAS, On August 25, 1950, Lieutenant Ledbetter was serving

1 on the USS *Benevolence*, a naval hospital ship, when it was
2 accidentally rammed by a freighter in San Francisco Bay; the
3 *Benevolence* keeled over on its side and sank within 45 minutes;
4 plunged into the cold water of the bay, Lieutenant Ledbetter tried
5 to help her fellow crew members; she was the last nurse to be pulled
6 from the water, and the prolonged exposure tragically proved too
7 great; she succumbed to hypothermia, becoming one of 23 people from
8 the *Benevolence* to lose their lives; and

9 WHEREAS, Sixty-five years later, Lieutenant Ledbetter's
10 naval service was recognized in a solemn ceremony in her hometown,
11 sponsored by the Western Trail and Austin Colony Chapters of the
12 National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution;
13 Lieutenant Ledbetter's sister, Emily Ledbetter Shoemaker, and
14 other members of her family were presented with the lieutenant's
15 posthumous decorations, including the World War II Victory Medal,
16 the American Campaign Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Medal, and the
17 Gold Star Pin; and

18 WHEREAS, Lieutenant Wilma Ledbetter dedicated her life to the
19 care of this nation's military personnel, and she kept faith with
20 that commitment until her very last moments; for her selfless
21 efforts and immeasurable sacrifice, Americans owe this outstanding
22 officer a debt that the passage of time can never diminish; now,
23 therefore, be it

24 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 84th Texas
25 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life and service of U.S. Navy
26 Lieutenant Wilma Ledbetter.