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1 SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The Texas Legislative Medal of Honor was established
3 to recognize gallant and intrepid service by a member of the state
4 or federal military forces, and Lieutenant Colonel Ed Dyess, a
5 highly decorated aviator and warrior called "the One-Man Scourge of
6 the Japanese" during World War II due to his remarkable adaptive
7 ability to fight a relentless, ruthless enemy in the Pacific
8 Theater as a combat pilot, infantry commander, prisoner of war, and
9 guerrilla, would be a fitting recipient of this prestigious award;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, Born in Albany, Shackelford County, on August 9,
12 1916, William Edwin Dyess exhibited natural leadership skills as
13 the student body president at Albany High School and as the class
14 president and commander of the R.O.T.C. detachment at John Tarleton
15 Agricultural College (now Tarleton State University); a
16 distinguished graduate of the flight schools at Randolph Field,
17 known as "the West Point of the Air," and Kelly Field in San
18 Antonio, Dyess was appointed commanding officer of the 21st Pursuit
19 Squadron and deployed to the Philippine Islands in 1941, where he
20 would become one of the first Americans to engage the enemy in World
21 War II; and

22 WHEREAS, During the early phase of the Pacific War, First
23 Lieutenant Dyess shot down six enemy planes, actions that would
24 have classified him as an "ace" if not for the lack of gun cameras

1 and the destruction by American forces of military records to
2 prevent them from falling into enemy hands; in late January 1942,
3 during an emergency shortage of combat aircraft, Dyess demonstrated
4 exceptional skill as a marksman and motivator as he led his
5 ill-equipped and inexperienced squadron of airmen in infantry
6 combat through the jungles of the Bataan Peninsula during the
7 "Battle of the Points"; and

8 WHEREAS, On February 8, 1942, Captain Dyess volunteered to
9 lead America's first amphibious landing of World War II, at
10 Agloloma Bay, to root out two enemy battalions that had entrenched
11 themselves with orders from Japanese commanding General Masaharu
12 Homma to wreak havoc behind the Filipino-American lines; Dyess was
13 the first man ashore, selflessly exposing himself to enemy fire
14 while engaging enemy positions with a Lewis machine gun and
15 motivating his apprehensive 20-man force to join him; amidst
16 exploding bombs, Dyess and his party secured the beachhead using
17 automatic weapons and hand grenades and eliminated approximately 75
18 heavily armed, elite Japanese troops who had fortified themselves
19 in caves; the failure of General Homma's operation allowed American
20 forces in the Philippines to hold out a few months longer, trapping
21 enemy resources and giving America time to mobilize in the wake of
22 the attack on Pearl Harbor; and

23 WHEREAS, On March 2, 1942, Dyess led nine pilots flying five
24 battered warplanes in a daring raid on the enemy supply depot at
25 Subic Bay, Luzon; flying a Curtiss P-40 Warhawk rigged to carry
26 500-pound bombs, Dyess braved heavy antiaircraft fire, engaged an
27 enemy cruiser, and ultimately destroyed one 12,000-ton transport,

1 one 6,000-ton vessel, at least two 100-ton motor launches, and a
2 handful of barges and lighters; in order to save face, Radio Tokyo
3 reported that 54 bombers and swarms of fighter planes had been
4 responsible for the attack; Dyess was presented with the
5 Distinguished Service Cross, the second-highest military
6 decoration that can be awarded, for the extraordinary heroism that
7 he displayed on this occasion; and

8 WHEREAS, Although many officers began to shirk their duties
9 and pull rank as the military situation deteriorated, Dyess worked
10 hard to boost the morale of his men, cleaning cockpits and flying
11 countless reconnaissance, resupply, and evacuation missions; he
12 sometimes flew up to 1,400 miles through enemy skies to bring back
13 desperately needed medicines and telegrams for his men; and

14 WHEREAS, Dyess refused multiple opportunities to leave the
15 doomed Bataan Peninsula and endeavored to ensure others were
16 evacuated before him; Dyess personally supervised the boarding of
17 evacuees on the last flyable aircraft on Bataan; the final seat was
18 reserved for Dyess himself, but at the last second he ordered a
19 friend onto the plane in his stead; and

20 WHEREAS, After the surrender of 75,000 American and Filipino
21 troops on Bataan on April 9, 1942, Dyess endured the most horrific
22 war crime in the history of the United States, the Bataan Death
23 March; Dyess watched as prisoners of war were denied water and
24 medical care, beaten, beheaded, whipped, shot, buried alive, run
25 over by tanks, and used for bayonet practice; due to his height,
26 fair complexion, and status as an officer, Dyess was singled out for
27 mistreatment and suffered through savage beatings; despite this,

1 Dyess shepherded his men forward, helped the wounded, and noted the
2 horrors taking place around him so that he could describe them in a
3 firsthand account; for the next six months, Dyess endured
4 starvation, disease, interrogation, and torture in two squalid
5 prison camps on Luzon, where he continued to encourage and aid his
6 fellow prisoners, smuggling food and medicine to those in need; and

7 WHEREAS, In November 1942, Captain Dyess arrived at the Davao
8 Penal Colony, known as "Dapecol," a reportedly escape-proof prison
9 plantation where 2,000 American prisoners of war were being forced
10 to work as slave laborers; while at Dapecol, Dyess co-organized a
11 team of United States military personnel to execute the only
12 large-scale prison break of prisoners of war in the Pacific War;
13 Dyess volunteered for the dangerous task of transporting the escape
14 party's gear on a bull cart past multiple guard checkpoints; on
15 April 4, 1943, the "Davao Dozen," 10 American prisoners of war and
16 two Filipino convicts, made their amazing escape through a deep,
17 crocodile-infested swamp; after eluding search parties, Dyess
18 fought alongside Filipino guerrilla forces behind enemy lines
19 before evacuating to Australia in July 1943; he received a
20 promotion to major and was personally presented with his second
21 Distinguished Service Cross, in the form of a Bronze Oak Leaf
22 Cluster, by General MacArthur on July 30, 1943; and

23 WHEREAS, Dyess would have enjoyed a hero's welcome had his
24 superiors not consigned him to a military hospital in the mountains
25 of West Virginia, where he was subjected to secret debriefings by
26 government officials; he was sequestered there because the
27 government feared that his story, if released to the public, would

1 jeopardize the "Europe First" strategic policy and Pacific prisoner
2 of war relief efforts of the Allies; despite suffering from
3 depression and severe post-traumatic stress disorder, Dyess was
4 determined to make his account of the Bataan Death March and other
5 atrocities known to the public, and he entered into a publishing
6 agreement with the *Chicago Tribune*; his epic story, trumpeted by
7 the War Department as "The Greatest Story of the War in the
8 Pacific," was eventually released on January 28, 1944, skillfully
9 timed to harness the full fury of America's anger; stagnant war bond
10 sales and service enlistment numbers soared as Dyess's revelations
11 forced America out of a mid-war complacency; and

12 WHEREAS, Lieutenant Colonel Dyess never lived to see his
13 remarkable story take hold of America; during a routine flight over
14 Los Angeles on December 22, 1943, his P-38 Lightning began to have
15 engine trouble; rather than bailing out and letting his plane
16 careen into a crowded residential area, Dyess attempted an
17 emergency city street landing, but he pulled up at the last moment
18 to avoid hitting a motorist who had strayed into his path; while
19 attempting to guide his crippled aircraft onto a vacant lot, he
20 struck a church and was killed instantly when his plane crashed;
21 Dyess was awarded the Soldier's Medal posthumously in recognition
22 of a heroic act not involving an armed enemy; Dyess's family
23 resisted the public's clamor for his interment at Arlington
24 National Cemetery and instead buried him in his beloved home state
25 in the Albany Cemetery; to this day, the only public recognition of
26 Dyess and his incredible life was the renaming of Abilene Air Force
27 Base to Dyess Air Force Base in 1956; and

1 WHEREAS, Lieutenant Colonel Ed Dyess risked his life
2 repeatedly in defense of his country, and he put the welfare of his
3 fellow prisoners of war ahead of his own; he revealed to the
4 American people a vital aspect of the war, and he ultimately
5 sacrificed his own life to save the life of another; he is most
6 assuredly deserving of this state's supreme military award; now,
7 therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, That the 84th Legislature of the State of Texas
9 hereby direct the governor of the State of Texas to award the Texas
10 Legislative Medal of Honor posthumously to Lieutenant Colonel Ed
11 Dyess in recognition of his extraordinary military service and
12 remarkable succession of valorous acts in World War II.