

By: Burns

H.R. No. 1542

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Family and friends will forever treasure their
2 memories of decorated World War II veteran Ervin Martin Koerth, who
3 died on October 8, 2013, at the age of 91; and

4 WHEREAS, Born on July 16, 1922, to Gus and Cora Koerth in
5 Nolan County, Texas, Ervin Koerth enlisted in the U.S. Army on his
6 20th birthday; after attending parachute jump school at Fort
7 Benning, Georgia, he became a member of the elite 551st Parachute
8 Infantry Battalion, an unattached unit of 800 men that was assigned
9 wherever it was most needed; and

10 WHEREAS, In mid-August 1944, Paratrooper Koerth and the 551st
11 took part in the Allied invasion of southern France; the unit
12 liberated Draguignan against heavy resistance, capturing a German
13 major general, and then took Nice on August 29; ordered next to the
14 French-Italian Alps for several months and subsequently to northern
15 France, the 551st was attached to the 82nd Infantry Division late in
16 the year, when it joined the Allied counteroffensive in the Battle
17 of the Bulge; Mr. Koerth, by then a staff sergeant and platoon
18 leader, helped drive the Germans back at Noirefontaine, Herispehe,
19 Dairomont, and Quartiers, enduring bitter cold and engaging in
20 brutal hand-to-hand combat; on January 7, 1945, the 551st took
21 Rochelival, but at a terrible cost, with casualties amounting to
22 more than 85 percent of its strength; by the end of its assault on
23 the superior German force, the 551st numbered only 14 officers and
24 96 troops; and

1 WHEREAS, The battalion was relieved on January 9, and
2 Sergeant Koerth, suffering from burst eardrums from the sheer noise
3 of the bombs, mortars, and artillery, was sent to an army hospital
4 for a month; while he was receiving treatment, the 551st was
5 deactivated and all its remaining personnel were absorbed into the
6 82nd Airborne Division; Mr. Koerth was assigned to the 504th
7 Parachute Infantry Battalion of the 82nd and fought with that unit
8 as far as the Elbe River; on May 2, 1945, the 82nd accepted the
9 surrender of the German 21st Army; some four and a half months
10 later, Mr. Koerth returned to the United States, and on September
11 25, 1945, he received an honorable discharge; and

12 WHEREAS, This intrepid Texan was awarded the Purple Heart,
13 the Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the
14 European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, and the Combat
15 Infantryman Badge; the 551st was recognized with a Presidential
16 Unit Citation for its actions during the Battle of the Bulge, as
17 well as with the Croix de Guerre from the French government for its
18 valor at Draguignan; and

19 WHEREAS, After the war, Mr. Koerth lived for many years in
20 Grand Prairie, where from 1968 until his retirement in 1978 he
21 operated his own company, LESKO, which made parts for the aircraft
22 industry; he shared a rewarding, seven-decade-long marriage with
23 his wife, Lois, whom he married while on furlough in 1943, and he
24 was the proud father of a daughter, Sandra; later in life, he was
25 blessed with three grandsons, Brian, Bart, and Harlan Kickhoefer;
26 Mr. Koerth passed away in 2013; and

27 WHEREAS, During the greatest conflict of the 20th century,

1 Ervin Koerth exemplified the highest ideals of the U.S. armed
2 forces, conducting himself with fortitude, tenacity, and courage,
3 and he has left behind a record of service to his country that will
4 continue to inspire all those who knew and loved him; now,
5 therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 85th Texas
7 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Ervin Martin Koerth
8 for his heroic efforts in behalf of this nation during World War II;
9 and, be it further

10 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
11 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
12 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Ervin
13 Martin Koerth.