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By:  Dean H.C.R. No. 105

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Texas Legislative Medal of Honor was established to recognize gallant and intrepid service by a member of the state or federal military forces, and retired U.S. Air Force Colonel James Edwin Ray proved himself a deserving recipient of this prestigious commendation with his heroic actions during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, Born in Longview in 1941, James Ray graduated with honors from Conroe High School and went on to attend Texas A&M University, where he graduated in 1964 with a bachelor's degree in English, the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Corps of Cadets, and a commission in the U.S. Air Force through the ROTC program; and

WHEREAS, After earning his pilot's wings at Vance Air Force Base in 1965, Lieutenant Ray trained on the F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bomber at Nellis AFB and earned his first assignments as an F-105 pilot with the 334th and 336th Tactical Fighter Squadrons at Seymour Johnson AFB; he was deployed to Southeast Asia in April 1966, when he joined the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Korat Royal Thai AFB in Thailand; he flew 10 extremely hazardous missions over North Vietnam, and on his 11th mission on May 8, 1966, he was forced to eject and was captured by the enemy; he spent more than six years and nine months as a prisoner of war in North Vietnamese prison camps, including the infamously brutal "Hanoi Hilton"; and

WHEREAS, During his captivity, Lieutenant Ray displayed remarkable fortitude and determination in the face of torture, starvation, and isolation; in spite of this treatment, he and his fellow prisoners avoided mental breakdown by devising clever ways to stay in touch with each other, by tapping out coded messages from cell to cell, or by hiding letters in an empty toothpaste container behind a brick in a wall; Lieutenant Ray and the other prisoners also drew strength and encouragement from memorizing and reciting verses from the Bible; and

WHEREAS, After the POWs were released in February 1973, this brave American took time to recover in the hospital and then resumed his air force career; at the rank of captain, he became an instructor pilot at Holloman AFB, and after completing Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB, he went on to serve with the 339th Fighter Squadron and the 347th Fighter Wing, at the U.S. Air Force headquarters, and as air attaché to Rome; he was then commander of the 3300th Technical Training Wing at Keesler AFB until his retirement at the rank of colonel on December 31, 1990; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Ray's commendations include the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit with bronze oak leaf cluster, the Bronze Star with valor device and bronze oak leaf cluster, the Purple Heart with bronze oak leaf cluster, the Meritorious Service Medal, and the Air Medal, among many others; and

WHEREAS, James Ray's skill and bravery as a pilot and his unswerving resilience distinguish him as a warrior of peerless courage and patriotism, and it is indeed appropriate that he be honored with the highest military award granted by the state where he was born; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 87th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby direct the governor of the State of Texas to award the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor to James Edwin Ray in recognition of his valiant service during the Vietnam War.