

By: Dean

H.C.R. No. 105

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

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

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

12           WHEREAS, After earning his pilot's wings at Vance Air Force  
13 Base in 1965, Lieutenant Ray trained on the F-105 Thunderchief  
14 fighter-bomber at Nellis AFB and earned his first assignments as an  
15 F-105 pilot with the 334th and 336th Tactical Fighter Squadrons at  
16 Seymour Johnson AFB; he was deployed to Southeast Asia in April  
17 1966, when he joined the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Korat  
18 Royal Thai AFB in Thailand; he flew 10 extremely hazardous missions  
19 over North Vietnam, and on his 11th mission on May 8, 1966, he was  
20 forced to eject and was captured by the enemy; he spent more than  
21 six years and nine months as a prisoner of war in North Vietnamese  
22 prison camps, including the infamously brutal "Hanoi Hilton"; and

23           WHEREAS, During his captivity, Lieutenant Ray displayed  
24 remarkable fortitude and determination in the face of torture,

1 starvation, and isolation; in spite of this treatment, he and his  
2 fellow prisoners avoided mental breakdown by devising clever ways  
3 to stay in touch with each other, by tapping out coded messages from  
4 cell to cell, or by hiding letters in an empty toothpaste container  
5 behind a brick in a wall; Lieutenant Ray and the other prisoners  
6 also drew strength and encouragement from memorizing and reciting  
7 verses from the Bible; and

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

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

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

27         RESOLVED, That the 87th Legislature of the State of Texas

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1 hereby direct the governor of the State of Texas to award the Texas  
2 Legislative Medal of Honor to James Edwin Ray in recognition of his  
3 valiant service during the Vietnam War.