

1-1 By: Campbell, Blanco, Hall S.C.R. No. 50
 1-2 (In the Senate - Filed May 11, 2021; May 12, 2021, read
 1-3 first time and referred to Committee on Veteran Affairs & Border
 1-4 Security; May 19, 2021, reported favorably by the following vote:
 1-5 Yeas 6, Nays 0; May 19, 2021, sent to printer.)

1-6 COMMITTEE VOTE

	Yea	Nay	Absent	PNV
1-7				
1-8	X			
1-9	X			
1-10	X			
1-11	X			
1-12	X			
1-13			X	
1-14	X			

1-15 SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1-16 WHEREAS, The Texas Legislative Medal of Honor was established
 1-17 to recognize gallant and intrepid service by a member of the state
 1-18 or federal military forces, and U.S. Army Private Marcelino Serna
 1-19 and U.S. Coast Guard Seaman Apprentice William Ray Flores proved
 1-20 themselves deserving recipients of this prestigious honor with
 1-21 their heroic actions in the service of their nation; and

1-22 WHEREAS, Born in Mexico, Mr. Serna came to the United States
 1-23 as a young man; when the United States entered World War I in 1917,
 1-24 he enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 20, and after only three
 1-25 weeks of training, he was shipped overseas with the 355th Infantry,
 1-26 89th Division; when his officers in France learned that he was not a
 1-27 U.S. citizen, they gave him the opportunity to return home, but
 1-28 Private Serna chose to stay and fight; and

1-29 WHEREAS, A remarkable soldier, Private Serna demonstrated
 1-30 exceptional resourcefulness and courage during an engagement near
 1-31 the French town of St. Mihiel; when 12 members of his unit were
 1-32 gunned down by the enemy, he volunteered to scout the machine gun
 1-33 emplacement on his own; moving through heavy fire and surviving two
 1-34 rounds that were deflected by his helmet, he tossed four hand
 1-35 grenades into the machine gun nest, killing six of the enemy
 1-36 combatants; he then took the eight survivors captive; and

1-37 WHEREAS, Shortly thereafter, during the Meuse-Argonne
 1-38 campaign, Private Serna volunteered again for a lone scouting
 1-39 mission, wounding a German sniper with a shot from 200 yards and
 1-40 then following the injured man into a trench; firing and hurling
 1-41 grenades in all directions to make it seem as if he were part of a
 1-42 larger force, he shot three German soldiers immediately, then
 1-43 attacked an enemy dugout, felling 26 more and capturing 24; he
 1-44 single-handedly held the prisoners at gunpoint until other members
 1-45 of his unit arrived; and

1-46 WHEREAS, Private Serna served in combat until the end of the
 1-47 war and was wounded in each leg, and while recovering in a French
 1-48 hospital, he received the Distinguished Service Cross from General
 1-49 John J. Pershing; he also earned the World War I Victory Medal with
 1-50 five stars, the Victory Medal with three campaign bars, the
 1-51 St. Mihiel Medal, the Verdun Medal, and two Purple Hearts, as well
 1-52 as decorations from the governments of France, Italy, and the
 1-53 United Kingdom; he became a U.S. citizen in 1924 and settled in El
 1-54 Paso, where he resided until his death in 1992; the most decorated
 1-55 Texas veteran of World War I, he won every major military award
 1-56 short of the Congressional Medal of Honor, and petitions have been
 1-57 put forth to grant him that commendation as well; and

1-58 WHEREAS, William Ray Flores was born in Carlsbad, New Mexico,
 1-59 in 1961; he attended Western Hills High School in Benbrook, Texas,
 1-60 and he left school early in order to enlist in the U.S. Coast Guard
 1-61 at the age of 17; he served aboard the buoy tender *Blackthorn*, and

2-1 on the night of January 28, 1980, the ship was leaving Tampa,
2-2 Florida, on route to its home port of Galveston when it collided
2-3 with a 600-foot tanker, the SS *Capricorn*; the *Blackthorn*'s hull was
2-4 ripped open along the port side by the *Capricorn*'s anchor, and the
2-5 vessel began to take on water and roll onto its side; and

2-6 WHEREAS, In the chaos and darkness, Seaman Apprentice Flores
2-7 and a shipmate found the locker that held the ship's life jackets,
2-8 and they began throwing jackets to their crewmates already in the
2-9 water; Seaman Apprentice Flores used his trouser belt to strap the
2-10 locker open so that more jackets could float free as the *Blackthorn*
2-11 sank, and after nearly everyone else had abandoned ship, he stayed
2-12 aboard and attempted to save those who were still trapped below
2-13 deck; he lost his life in that effort, along with 22 of his
2-14 shipmates; and

2-15 WHEREAS, Through his selfless actions, Seaman Apprentice
2-16 Flores helped save 27 of his shipmates, and in September 2000, he
2-17 was posthumously awarded the Coast Guard Medal, the service's
2-18 highest commendation for noncombat heroism; in 2012, the Coast
2-19 Guard fast response cutter *William Flores* was named in his honor,
2-20 and on the 40th anniversary of the *Blackthorn*'s accident in January
2-21 2020, a life-size statue of Seaman Apprentice Flores was unveiled
2-22 at a ceremony in St. Petersburg, Florida; and

2-23 WHEREAS, Marcelino Serna and William Flores each
2-24 demonstrated uncommon courage, initiative, and devotion to their
2-25 comrades during desperate situations, and it is indeed appropriate
2-26 that they be honored with the highest military award granted by the
2-27 state that is proud to call them Texans; now, therefore, be it

2-28 RESOLVED, That the 87th Legislature of the State of Texas
2-29 hereby direct the governor of the State of Texas to posthumously
2-30 award the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor to Marcelino Serna in
2-31 recognition of his valiant efforts during World War I and to William
2-32 Ray Flores in recognition of his heroism during the sinking of the
2-33 USCGC *Blackthorn*.

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