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ACR-188 Colonel Young Oak Kim, United States Army, Memorial Highway. (2017-2018)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 188

CHAPTER 122

Relative to the Colonel Young Oak Kim, United States Army, Memorial Highway.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 10, 2018.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 188, Quirk-Silva. Colonel Young Oak Kim, United States Army, Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a specified portion of Interstate 5 in the County of Orange as the Colonel Young Oak Kim, United States Army, Memorial Highway. The measure would also request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost of appropriate signage showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering the cost, to erect those signs.

Fiscal Committee: yes

WHEREAS, Young Oak Kim was born in 1919 in the City of Los Angeles to Soon Kwon Kim and Nora Koh, who had four sons, two daughters, and one adopted son; and

WHEREAS, Soon Kwon Kim, his father, was a member of The Great Korean Association; and

WHEREAS, Young Oak Kim graduated from Belmont High School and attended Los Angeles City College, but dropped out to help support his impoverished family; and

WHEREAS, The United States Army refused his enlistment until Congress enacted a law subjecting Asian Americans to conscription and Young Oak Kim was drafted on January 31, 1941; and

WHEREAS, After spending six months as an engineer, Young Oak Kim was selected for Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, and, upon graduating in January 1943, was assigned to the United States 100th Infantry Battalion, a unit composed of Japanese Americans from Hawaii; and

WHEREAS, Fearing ethnic conflict between Young Oak Kim and the Japanese American troops, the battalion commander offered Kim a transfer to another battalion, but Kim remained, saying, "There are no Japanese nor Korean here, we're all Americans and we're fighting for the same cause"; and

WHEREAS, The 100th Infantry Battalion was sent to fight in North Africa and then in Italy where Young Oak Kim's map-reading skills and determination led to success in several battles and "impossible missions"; and

WHEREAS, Second Lieutenant Kim's first deployment was in Salerno, Italy, as part of the Allied offensive against German forces, during which he was wounded near Santa Maria Oliveto, and was subsequently awarded a Silver Star and his first Purple Heart;

and

WHEREAS, Young Oak Kim was then promoted to first lieutenant and participated in the Battle of Monte Cassino as part of the Allied attempt to liberate Rome from German control; and

WHEREAS, In planning for Operation Diadem, the Allies needed to determine the location of German tank units; and

WHEREAS, First Lieutenant Kim, as an officer in the joint United States 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team, volunteered to capture German soldiers to gain military intelligence; and

WHEREAS, On May 16, 1944, with Private First Class Irving Akahoshi, First Lieutenant Kim crawled into German-held territory near Cisterna, Italy, and captured two German soldiers during daylight hours while the enemy rested for evening watch; and

WHEREAS, Using the intelligence from the two captured German soldiers, the Allies broke the Gustav Line and liberated Rome; and

WHEREAS, For his actions, First Lieutenant Kim was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Italian Bronze Medal of Military Valor in 1944, and the Italian War Cross for Military Valor in 1945; and

WHEREAS, First Lieutenant Kim also led elements of the 100th Infantry Battalion in battles at Belvedere and Pisa, which helped break the Gothic Line, and enabled the Allies to occupy Pisa without casualties; and

WHEREAS, In France, First Lieutenant Kim was the 100th Infantry Battalion's operations officer, and fought in battles that liberated the towns of Bruyères and Biffontaine, but he sustained severe wounds from enemy fire in Biffontaine, and was granted a six-month leave in Los Angeles, California, in late 1944; and

WHEREAS, Germany surrendered shortly before he could return to the European Theater of Operations, and Kim, now a captain, was honorably discharged from the United States Army; and

WHEREAS, For his actions, Captain Kim received a second Purple Heart and a French Croix de Guerre, along with a plaque dedicated to him on a Biffontaine church wall; and

WHEREAS, After leaving the United States Army, Young Oak Kim started a successful self-service laundry, which was rare at the time, and earned five times his salary as an Army captain, but, two years later in 1950, war broke out in Korea and he left the business and reenlisted in the Army; and

WHEREAS, Young Oak Kim stated, "As a Korean, the most direct way to help my father's country even a little, and as a United States citizen, the most direct way to repay even a little of the debt owed to Korea by the United States, was to go to Korea, pick up a gun, and fight"; and

WHEREAS, At his request, Young Oak Kim was sent to East Asia, which was the first time he had ever been to Korea, and, by pretending not to know Korean and with help from people he knew during World War II, he was able to join the infantry; and

WHEREAS, Young Oak Kim was assigned to the 31st Infantry Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division in April 1951 as an intelligence officer and operations officer under Lieutenant General William J. McCaffrey, who had scouted him; and

WHEREAS, Young Oak Kim rescued many United States and South Korean soldiers during battle with the 31st Infantry Regiment playing a major role in pushing Chinese troops back above the 38th parallel, which was first crossed by his unit; and

WHEREAS, In August 1951 during Operation Piledriver, Young Oak Kim's unit was mistakenly bombarded by the 555th Field Artillery Battalion because it was able to advance too far north past Kimhwa to appear friendly; and

WHEREAS, He was severely injured in the friendly fire incident, but was saved by doctors from Johns Hopkins University who were in Tokyo, and he returned to Korea after two months of recuperation; and

WHEREAS, Upon his return, Lieutenant General McCaffrey put him in command of the regiment's 1st Battalion and promoted him to major, making Young Oak Kim the first minority officer to command an army battalion in United States history; and

WHEREAS, Under Major Kim's command, the battalion adopted an orphanage in Seoul and cared for more than 500 war orphans, enabling the orphans to grow up to become artists, musicians, and other successful professionals; and

WHEREAS, After fighting for nearly a year, Major Kim left Korea in September 1952, and, in 2003, the South Korean government honored him for his service to society; and

WHEREAS, After serving in the Korean War, Major Kim became an instructor at the United States Army Infantry School in Fort Benning, Georgia, then served in Germany as a staff officer and was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1959, and then became an instructor at the United States Army Command and General Staff College; and

WHEREAS, Major Kim returned to Korea in the early 1960s as a United States military advisor to the South Korean army, during which time he was promoted to the rank of colonel; and

WHEREAS, After serving in the United States Army for 30 years, Young Oak Kim attended California State University Dominguez Hills to study history, but left after a year to advocate for greater causes—racial equality, youths, the elderly, and the poor; and

WHEREAS, In 1973, Young Oak Kim joined Special Service for Groups (SSG), a nonprofit health and human services organization dedicated to building and sustaining community-based programs that address the needs of vulnerable and diverse multiethnic communities; and

WHEREAS, Young Oak Kim was nominated to be a board member for the United Way by George Nishinaka, the head of SSG, and went on to become the first person to serve on that board for 10 years; and

WHEREAS, As a United Way board member, Young Oak Kim recognized underserved ethnic communities and worked to provide them with linguistically and culturally competent services; and

WHEREAS, When Young Oak Kim joined the United Way board, the Chinatown Service Center was the only Asian United Way service center, but he added Japanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Korean American centers to United Way's network, and helped to diversify the board through the addition of three more Asian American board members; and

WHEREAS, Young Oak Kim also helped found the Korean Youth Cultural Center, was a founding member of the Korean American Coalition, and, from 1986 to 1988, served as a member of Serving the Family and Friends of the Keiro Homes; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the 1990s, Young Oak Kim served as chairman of the Center for Pacific Asian Family and, under his leadership, the organization became the largest women's shelter in southern California; and

WHEREAS, In 1986, Young Oak Kim cofounded the Korean Health, Education, Information and Research Center (KHEIR) to provide recent, uninformed immigrants in southern California with health care information and services, and, as one of largest ethnic charity organizations today, KHEIR continues to help immigrants obtain health care and offers them bilingual services in English, Spanish, and Korean; and

WHEREAS, From 1989 to 2005, Young Oak Kim served as chairman of 100th/442nd/MIS WWII Memorial Foundation, a veteran's association of Japanese American soldiers who fought during World War II; and

WHEREAS, Young Oak Kim also cofounded the Go for Broke Monument, the Go for Broke National Educational Center, and the Japanese American National Museum; and

WHEREAS, These community efforts were instrumental in providing new immigrants with the tools to acclimate and become self-sufficient; and

WHEREAS, On December 29, 2005, Colonel Kim passed away at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California, leaving a strong legacy of community service to the residents of southern California; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That, in light of Colonel Young Oak Kim's service to Asian Americans and to United States veterans, the Legislature hereby designates the portion of southbound Interstate 5 in the County of Orange, near its boundary with the County of Los Angeles (post mile 44.382), to the eastbound State Route 91 exit (post mile 42.671), as the Colonel Young Oak Kim, United States Army, Memorial Highway; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of Transportation is requested to determine the cost of appropriate signage consistent with signing requirements for the state highway system showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources sufficient to cover the cost, to erect those signs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the Director of Transportation and to the author for appropriate distribution.