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SCR-111 Purple Heart Day. (2023-2024)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 111

CHAPTER 159

Relative to Purple Heart Day.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 13, 2024.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 111, Seyarto. Purple Heart Day.

This measure would declare August 7, 2024, as Purple Heart Day in California.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, The Purple Heart is awarded to members of the Armed Forces of the United States who are killed or wounded in action; and

WHEREAS, Created in 1932, the Purple Heart has a long and storied past that dates back to the founders of the United States. The award takes its design from the Badge of Military Merit, which was commissioned by General George Washington on August 7, 1782. This award consisted of a purple, heart-shaped piece of silk having a narrow edge of silver stitched with the word "Merit" across the face and is considered to be the first official military combat badge of the Armed Forces of the United States. The official successor decoration of the Badge of Military Merit is the Purple Heart; and

WHEREAS, Originally, the Purple Heart award was only open to United States Army and Air Force service members and could not be awarded posthumously. President Franklin D. Roosevelt changed that in 1942 with an executive order that opened the award to members of the United States Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Later that year, in a separate order, the award was made available for posthumous award to any member of the military; and

WHEREAS, During World War II, 1,506,000 Purple Heart medals were manufactured, many in anticipation of the estimated casualties resulting from the planned Allied invasion of Japan. By the end of the war, even accounting for medals lost, stolen, or wasted, nearly 500,000 remained. To the present date, total combined American military casualties of the 70 years following the end of World War II, including the Korean and Vietnam Wars, have not exceeded that number. In 2000, there remained 120,000 Purple Heart medals in stock. The existing surplus allowed combat units in Iraq and Afghanistan to keep Purple Hearts on-hand for immediate award to soldiers wounded in the field; and

WHEREAS, To date, approximately 2,000,000 Purple Heart Medals have been awarded. The award can be awarded retroactively as far back as 1917, allowing veterans from World War I to be eligible; and

WHEREAS, Originally, the Purple Heart was awarded for meritorious service, and injury was a consideration for merit. In 1942, the creation of the Legion of Merit award duplicated the merit requirement, which became unnecessary for the Purple Heart; and

WHEREAS, From 1942 to 1997, inclusive, civilians serving in, or affiliated with, the Armed Forces of the United States were eligible to receive the Purple Heart. Some of the earliest civilians to receive this honor were firefighters wounded or killed while fighting fires caused by the attack on Pearl Harbor; and

WHEREAS, Since California is home to more than 1,800,000 veterans and more than 200,000 active and reserve members of the Armed Forces of the United States, it is especially appropriate for all Californians to honor those who have been awarded the Purple Heart; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature encourages all Californians to honor those who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States, especially those who have been wounded and received the Purple Heart, and declares August 7, 2024, as Purple Heart Day in California; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.