

## HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1011

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, Expressing the Legislature's consummate respect and appreciation for the service of Master Sergeant Woodrow Wilson Keeble, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, a recipient of the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award.

WHEREAS, On March 3, 2008, the family of Master Sergeant Woodrow Wilson Keeble accepted on his behalf the Medal of Honor, awarded for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life, above and beyond the call of duty, during the Korean War. The award was presented by the President of the United States, George W. Bush, nearly sixty years after Master Sergeant Keeble's heroic actions in Korea and twenty-six years after his death in 1982; and

WHEREAS, Woodrow Wilson Keeble was born in 1917 in Waubay, South Dakota and was an enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate. He lived much of his early life in the Wahpeton, North Dakota area and attended the Wahpeton Indian School. An excellent athlete, he was a professional baseball prospect before being called to military service during World War II; and

WHEREAS, Woodrow Wilson Keeble served during World War II in the Pacific Theater of Operations as a member of the 164th Infantry Regiment of the North Dakota National Guard, which was activated into federal service and assigned to United States Army's 23rd Infantry Division, known as the Americal Division. Mr. Keeble and the Americal Division served with distinction in multiple campaigns in the Pacific, including Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and on the islands of Leyte, Cebu, and Mindanao in the Philippines. For his service during World War II, Mr. Keeble earned the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device for valor at Guadalcanal, and the Purple Heart Medal; and

WHEREAS, Upon activation of his National Guard unit during the Korean War, Master Sergeant Keeble volunteered for immediate combat duty and was assigned to G Company, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He served in Korea from February of 1951 to April of 1952; and

WHEREAS, Master Sergeant Keeble displayed exemplary leadership and courage during his service in Korea, particularly during a furious series of engagements in October, 1951 as part of Operation Nomad, which involved the taking of mountainous territory from deeply entrenched Chinese troops protecting a major Chinese supply depot near the town of Kumsong. He was

wounded on October 15, and again on October 17, 18, and 20, for which he received only one Purple Heart. His actions on October 20, however, resulted in his eventual award of the Medal of Honor, fifty-seven years after the event; and

WHEREAS, Master Sergeant Keeble exhibited extraordinary heroism on October 20, 1951, near Kumsong when another platoon in G Company found itself pinned down by enemy fire in its sixth day of round-the-clock fighting. Master Sergeant Keeble, having already sustained two gunshot wounds to his arm and multiple grenade fragmentation wounds to his face and body, and against the advice of his platoon medic to stay back because of his wounds, left the relative safety of his own platoon to assist the pinned down unit. Using grenades and a Browning Automatic rifle, and in the face of increasingly concentrated enemy fire directed at him, Master Sergeant Keeble single-handedly destroyed three four-man enemy machine gun bunkers and killed an additional seven enemy riflemen in nearby trenches, thus saving numerous American lives and allowing his company and other U.S. units to advance and to achieve their crucial and strategic mountain objective; and

WHEREAS, Master Sergeant Keeble initially received the Distinguished Service Cross for his bravery during the October 20th battle. For his service in Korea, he was also awarded the Silver Star Medal, the nation's third highest award for heroism in combat, as well as a second award of the Bronze Star Medal, a second award of the Combat Infantryman's Badge, and a second award of the Purple Heart, even though he was wounded on at least five separate occasions during World War II and Korea. He emerged from his military service as one of the Dakotas' most decorated combat veterans; and

WHEREAS, Master Sergeant Keeble was twice recommended for the Medal of Honor in late 1951 for his actions during Operation Nomad, including a recommendation signed by all of the surviving members of G Company. However, the recommendations were lost in the battle area; and

WHEREAS, Master Sergeant Keeble's family in 1972 began efforts to upgrade his Distinguished Service Cross to the Medal of Honor. With the support of Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribal officials, they gathered statements and eyewitness accounts from the men who had served with Master Sergeant Keeble and sought help from the North and South Dakota congressional delegations. On March 23, 2007, legislation was introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senators Byron Dorgan and Kent Conrad of North Dakota and Senators Tim Johnson and John Thune of South Dakota to award Master Sergeant Keeble the Medal of Honor for valor during the Korean War. Congress passed this

legislation in December of 2007; and

WHEREAS, Master Sergeant Woodrow Wilson Keeble is the first Dakota, Lakota, or Nakota Sioux tribal member to be awarded the Medal of Honor. His outstanding record of bravery and selfless sacrifice in the most difficult of times speaks for itself, and his legacy of courage, dignity, and service to his tribe, his state, and his country lives on:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the House of Representatives of the Eighty-Third Legislature of the State of South Dakota, the Senate concurring therein, that the South Dakota Legislature extends its undying respect and gratitude to Master Sergeant Woodrow Wilson Keeble, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate, who served with distinction in the United States Army during World War II and who earned this nation's highest military award, the Medal of Honor, for his heroic service during the Korean War; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Legislature recognizes with regret that this award came many years after Master Sergeant Keeble's death. It is our earnest hope that his family will take comfort in this belated award and that Master Sergeant Woodrow Wilson Keeble's example will continue to inspire the people of this state and the entire nation.

Adopted by the House of Representatives,  
Concurred in by the Senate,

March 17, 2008  
March 17, 2008

---

Tim Rave  
Speaker Pro Tempore

---

Karen Gerdes  
Chief Clerk of the House

---

Dennis Dugaard  
President of the Senate

---

Trudy Evenstad  
Secretary of the Senate