

RESOLUTION NO. 240

COMMEMORATING SERGEANT HENRY JOHNSON AND THE CENTENNIAL OF THE COURAGEOUS ACTIONS FOR WHICH HE WAS AWARDED THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR

Introduced: 5/14/18

By: Messrs. A Joyce, Feeney, Clay, Ms. Chapman, Mr. Fein, Ms. McKnight, Mr. Simpson, Ms. Willingham, Messrs. Beston, Bullock, Clenahan, Commisso, Ms. Cunningham, Messrs. Dawson, Domalewicz, Ethier, Higgins, R. Joyce, Ms. Lekakis, Mr. Mayo, Ms. McLean Lane, Messrs. Miller, O'Brien, Ms. Plotsky, Messrs. Reinhardt, Signoracci, Smith, Touchette, Ward, Burgdorf, Crouse, Drake, Grimm, Hogan, Ms. Lockart, Mr. Mauriello, Mendick, Stevens and Tunny:

WHEREAS, Henry Johnson was born on Dec. 18th, 1897, in North Carolina, and moved to Albany around 1913, where he worked as a soda mixer in a pharmacy and redcap porter at the Union Station on Broadway, and

WHEREAS, On June 5th, 1917, Johnson joined an all-black regiment with New York National Guard Company C, 15th New York Company Infantry, which later became the 369th U.S. Infantry Regiment, and

WHEREAS, In 1918, then-Private Johnson arrived in France with the all-African-American unit, whose distinguished service under French command on the Western Front earned them the moniker of the "Harlem Hellfighters", and

WHEREAS, At midnight on May 15th, 1918, Johnson and Private Needham Roberts, were assigned to sentry duty at a small outpost along the French-German border. Between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m., a platoon of at least twenty opposing Germans attacked the position in an effort to take them prisoner and obtain intelligence, and

WHEREAS, Johnson was struck by enemy gunfire, and both he and Roberts were wounded by shrapnel from an exploding grenade, with Roberts losing consciousness shortly afterwards, and

WHEREAS, Johnson, his rifle jamming after firing only three rounds, resorted to hand-to-hand combat with the butt of his rifle, and later, with his bolo knife, and

WHEREAS, Johnson, on the verge of collapsing from his injuries, exposed himself to enemy fire and charged with his bolo knife at two Germans who had captured Roberts, and rescued his fellow soldier, causing the enemy to retreat, and

WHEREAS, Johnson fought valiantly in what has become known as "Henry Johnson's Battle," killing four Germans and wounding between ten and twenty

more, while sustaining twenty-one injuries himself. Former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt praised Johnson's actions, calling him one of the five bravest Americans to serve in World War I, and

WHEREAS, In recognition of the heroic actions of Henry Johnson, the French government awarded him the Croix de Guerre Avec Palme, one of France's highest military awards for combat heroism, and Henry Johnson was given a large parade in New York City, and

WHEREAS, Henry Johnson, who is interred at Arlington National Cemetery with other fallen American heroes, was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart in 1996, the Distinguished Service Cross in 2002, and in 2015, the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest and most prestigious award that can be bestowed for acts of valor and bravery above and beyond the call of duty, and

WHEREAS, The Albany County Legislature believes that it is necessary and right to honor the memory of Henry Johnson and reflect on his actions as an exemplar of courage and selfless duty, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, On the eve of the 100th anniversary of Henry Johnson's battle, the Albany County Legislature asks all of Albany County to remember the heroic bravery and fortitude of Henry Johnson and strive to meet his example and continue his legacy of service to his community and to his Nation, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the County Legislature is directed to forward certified copies of this resolution to the appropriate County Officials.

Adopted by unanimous vote - 5/14/18