**A** **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR THE MANY SACRIFICES AND VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS THE SOUTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD MAKES TO PROTECT THE FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY, AND SECURITY OF OUR STATE AND NATION AND TO DECLARE TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2018, “NATIONAL GUARD DAY” IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, the South Carolina National Guard is a community‑based military organization with a dual role: to serve abroad in support of national defense in partnership with active duty and reserve units and to serve the Governor and citizens of South Carolina. The strength of the SC National Guard is its personnel. Currently, the SC Army Guard has more than nine thousand four hundred soldiers, and the SC Air Guard has more than one thousand three hundred airmen; and

Whereas, protecting the citizens of the Palmetto State both at home and abroad, the SC National Guard came to the aid of the citizens of this great State during Hurricane Matthew. At the peak of operations, more than two thousand nine hundred soldiers and airmen supported efforts to evacuate over three hundred fifty thousand citizens near the coast. In addition to evacuation support, their mission included security, traffic control points, debris removal, route clearance, points of distribution, transportation of sandbags and supplies, damage assessments, engineer support, and water purification. Additionally, the SC Army National Guard sent aid to quench the fires in Pickens County in November 2016 by using UH‑60 Black Hawks and CH‑47 Chinook helicopters to drop nearly three million gallons of water; and

Whereas, the SC National Guard has deployed more than nineteen thousand soldiers and airmen in support of overseas contingency operations since September 11, 2001, and currently there are more than five hundred guard members deployed to Europe, Kuwait, the Horn of Africa, Guantanamo, Southwest Asia, and Afghanistan in support of maintaining American freedom; and

Whereas, amongst a group of dedicated patriots, a few are distinguished each year for their exemplary character and service. The 2018 award winners for the Air Guard are Airman of the Year Staff Sergeant Matthew Nelson, 169th SFS; Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Staff Sergeant Victoria Caldwell, 169th CS; Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Senior Master Sergeant Stephen Rector, 169th CES; First Sergeant of the Year Master Sergeant Alex Gross, 169th FW; Officer of the Year Captain Bradley Cline, 245th ATC; and Air Guard Family of the Year Master Sergeant Amy and Senior Master Sergeant Toby Kyzer, 169th FW; and

Whereas, the SC Army National Guard hosts an annual contest, the Best Warrior Competition, where individuals are evaluated on their combat‑soldier skills, including land navigation, physical fitness, marksmanship, a road march, and a series of knowledge‑based questions. This year’s winners are Soldier of the Year Specialist Raymond Felton, 133rd MP Company; Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Staff Sergeant James E. Oliver, 218th Regiment; and Warrant Officer of the Year Chief Warrant Officer Two Chantal McCray, 218th MEB. Additional Army Guard awards are granted for meritorious service, and the 2018 award winners are Captain Christopher Huber, 1221st EN Company, who was presented with the Major General Dozier Award; Sergeant First Class Thomas Martin, R & R, who was granted the Director’s Award; and Mrs. Michelle Priest, bestowed with the Family/Volunteer of the Year Award; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly is extremely grateful for the service that the members of the South Carolina National Guard have given to protect the citizens and traditional values of this nation and deeply honor the memory of the sixteen soldiers in the South Carolina National Guard who have paid the ultimate price in support of combat operations since September 11, 2001. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring:

That the members of the South Carolina General Assembly, by this resolution, recognize and honor the many sacrifices and valuable contributions the South Carolina National Guard makes to protect the freedom, democracy, and security of our State and nation and declare Tuesday, March 20, 2018, “National Guard Day” in South Carolina.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Major General Robert E. Livingston, Jr.

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