**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR MAJOR JAMES CAPERS, JR., UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RETIRED, FOR HIS MANY MILITARY EXPLOITS AND FOR HIS EXEMPLARY AND HEROIC SERVICE AND TO EXPRESS THE PROFOUND APPRECIATION OF A GRATEFUL STATE AND NATION FOR HIS LIFE AND SERVICE.

Whereas, with deep appreciation, the South Carolina House of Representatives salutes the unparalleled service that members of the United States armed forces render for the ideals of liberty and justice so richly enjoyed in this nation; and

Whereas, born in Bishopville on August 25, 1937, James Capers was the son of sharecroppers and grew up in Baltimore during Jim Crow, yet in the proud tradition of sons of South Carolina, he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1956 when only four percent of the Marine Corps was African American; and

Whereas, as a Force Reconnaissance Marine, an elite fighting team often charged with classified missions behind enemy lines, he was only a corporal on his first deployment when President Dwight Eisenhower sent troops to Lebanon to halt a possible coup of the pro‑Western regime there. When a hundred insurgents attacked his position, he fought to repel the enemy with only a dozen Marines, his quick thinking, and his leadership; and

Whereas, the members of his untested 3rd Force Recon team were sent on their first major Vietnam mission when he was Staff Sergeant Capers. In an amphibious assault to clear the DMZ of Viet Cong forces and secure the area for incoming Marines, the unit made four amphibious assault landings under hostile fire that left thirty‑six dead and more than two hundred wounded. Overcome by a thousand enemy soldiers, the team rescued sixteen Marines and prevented enemy troops from crossing into South Vietnam; and

Whereas, the first African American to lead a Force Recon company, Major Capers led fifty Force Recon missions in Vietnam in near‑death experiences with a commitment to the ideals that govern the actions of a combat Marine because of the oath he had taken to defend his nation with only the boundaries of moral integrity and those rules of combat. The missions, classified until recently, were unknown to the public; and

Whereas, the name *Team Broadminded*, is the name the Force Recon team gave itself, and “*Major Capers: The Legend of Team Broadminded”* is the title of a recently released documentary that tells the story of this pioneer in developing Marine reconnaissance training tactics, whose character is defined by respect for others and by dedication to the Marine Corps, the men he led, and service; and

Whereas, in 1966, he led the 3rd Force Recon on a top‑secret mission to recover the contents and pilot remains of a B‑57 Canberra Bomber that had crashed in North Vietnam’s enemy territory, and was rumored to have highly sensitive materials and a nuclear bomb. The unit penetrated enemy lines and located the stripped plane, but when typhoon‑like rain kept them from meeting their extraction chopper, they had to trek through miles of treacherous jungle terrain, rivers, and two mine fields to avoid North Vietnamese soldiers; and

Whereas, upon completion of that mission, Major Capers became the first African American to earn a battlefield commission and was later awarded the Silver Star medal for his heroism. Wounded nineteen times in combat, he tells his heroic story in the book entitled *Faith Through the Storm*, a story of discipline, training, loyalty to his oath, and truly unique ability; and

Whereas, one of the most decorated African Americans ever to serve and a man of deep faith, he was the first African-American Marine to be nominated for the Medal of Honor. He received three Purple Hearts and two Bronze Stars among several other decorations; and

Whereas, in 1967, Major Capers became the face for the “Ask a Marine” recruitment campaign poster, the most popular campaign in the history of the Marine Corps, and in 2010, he was one of only fourteen members inducted into the first class of the United States Special Operations Command’s Commando Hall of Honor. He and the remaining members of 3rd Force Recon still observe an annual reunion. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, recognize and honor Major James Capers, Jr., United States Marine Corps Retired, for his many military exploits and for his exemplary and heroic service on behalf of his nation and express the profound appreciation of a grateful State and nation for his life and service.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Major James Capers.

‑‑‑‑XX‑‑‑‑