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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, On December 7, 1941, the Japanese Navy launched a sneak attack on the American military base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; as enemy aircraft unleashed a maelstrom of bombs and bullets overhead, Doris "Dorie" Miller carried countless crew members to safety, including his ship's commanding officer, Captain Mervyn S. Bennion, who died in Miller's arms; and

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WHEREAS, Doris Miller, the ship's cook, left the Captain's side and climbed into the ship's .50-caliber Browning anti-aircraft machine gun and began shooting down the attacking enemy planes until he ran out of ammunition; amazingly, Miller had never been trained on any anti-aircraft, artillery, or heavy gunnery equipment, due to Navy rules that disallowed African-Americans from being trained in combat roles; Miller was the first African-American to be awarded the distinguished Navy Cross, the Naval award second only to the Medal of Honor, for his actions; many schools, United States postage stamps, public parks, municipal buildings, and even a Navy destroyer have been named after Miller for his brave actions; and

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WHEREAS, As an African-American who served his country at a time when the Jim Crow laws of the South imposed racial segregation and public lynchings of African-Americans desecrated the principles of justice and equality, Doris

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1 Miller's courage and selfless example inspired countless
2 African-Americans to support the war effort; his heroic epic
3 helped inspire over one-million African Americans to enlist in
4 a segregated military, serving shoulder to shoulder as one
5 nation in a separate but unequal landscape; Miller also toured
6 the country while still assigned to ship duty to speak to
7 Americans about the importance of service and duty, addressing
8 the first African-American graduating class of the Great Lakes
9 Naval Station before being marked as "missing in action" and
10 "presumed dead" because he returned to ship duty; and

11 WHEREAS, Captain Mervyn Bennion was posthumously awarded
12 the Medal of Honor for his actions in leading his men while
13 fighting his last breaths, forcing out orders and directions
14 despite mortal wounds to his stomach by torpedo shrapnel;
15 although Doris Miller is widely known as the "Hero of Pearl
16 Harbor" and 16 Naval service members have already been awarded
17 the Medal of Honor for the Battle of Pearl Harbor alone, Doris
18 Miller, in the face of his great acts of courage, has been
19 overlooked for the Medal of Honor; and

20 WHEREAS, Doris Miller was killed on November 24, 1943
21 during the Battle of Makin Island while aboard the USS Liscome
22 Bay after the ship was struck by a torpedo from a Japanese
23 submarine; he was 24 years old; and

1 WHEREAS, Those brave men and women who make the ultimate
2 sacrifice to defend this country deserve our respect and our
3 deepest gratitude; Doris Miller is an American hero, the first
4 African-American hero of World War II, and a shining example of
5 what the Medal of Honor signifies; therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
7 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
8 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we urge the President of the
9 United States to posthumously award the Medal of Honor to Doris
10 "Dorie" Miller for his courageous actions during the attack on
11 Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
13 delivered to the President of the United States.