**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO EXPRESS THE PROFOUND SORROW OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA SENATE UPON THE DEATH OF TOMIE GAINES OF GREENVILLE AND TO EXTEND THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY AND MANY FRIENDS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina Senate were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Tomie Gaines of Greenville on February 14, 2016; and

Whereas, born on November 3, 1922, Tomie Gaines had attained the venerable age of ninety‑three when he passed away; and

Whereas, Tomie Gaines was granted a long and productive life, but one aspect of that life stood out for him and stayed with him in memory always: his World War II military service as a medic, which took place in a segregated cavalry unit modeled on the Civil War era “Buffalo Soldier” regiments (1943‑1945). Mr. Gaines treated the injured on the battlefields of North Africa and Italy, but he always downplayed his service. He would say, “I didn’t do nothing but try to save a few people”; and

Whereas, as a World War II medic, Tomie Gaines indeed saved lives. However, one day the medic became the patient when a German hand grenade found its mark on Tomie Gaines’s head. To the end of his life, he bore the scar where the metal pierced his helmet, drilled through the liner, and left him unconscious for two days; and

Whereas, in recent years, Mr. Gaines proudly took a long‑awaited trip to Washington, D.C., as one of one hundred South Carolina World War II veterans participating in an Honor Flight. He and his fellow vets enjoyed the day immensely, but at Reagan International Airport, while awaiting the Honor Flight’s return trip to South Carolina, Tomie Gaines proved in another way his remarkable ability to enjoy life even at his advanced age: he jitterbugged with a USO volunteer; and

Whereas, in 2012, Tomie Gaines was honored during a Veterans Day ceremony with special recognition for his military service. The event was especially meaningful for him because it took place at the historic Richland Cemetery, one of the oldest African‑American cemeteries in Greenville; and

Whereas, a very active and highly regarded member of VFW Post 6734, Tomie Gaines participated in nearly all of the post’s events, and his comrades marveled at his commitment, grit, spirit, and fortitude. He was a longtime member of the post’s celebrated honor guard. Still a valuable leader and solid advisor at his great age, he fired the post’s unique World War II rifles in ceremonies with drill precision; and

Whereas, this humble man, who served with such dedication, will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing and working with him. Sleep well, sir. Your fellow South Carolinians salute you and offer grateful thanks to Almighty God for your faithful service. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, express their profound sorrow upon the death of Tomie Gaines of Greenville and extend the deepest sympathy to his family and many friends.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to the family.

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