

By: Senator(s) Gollott, Barnett, Blackwell,
Carmichael, Caughman, Clarke, Dearing,
Fillingane, Frazier, Hill, McMahan, Moran,
Parker, Simmons (13th), Stone, Tindell,
Watson, Wilemon, Jackson (11th), Jackson
(32nd), Jackson (15th)

To: Rules

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 507

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION SALUTING THE HEROIC WORLD WAR II
2 FIGHTER PILOT SERVICE OF FORMER BILOXI MAYOR JERRY O'KEEFE ON THE
3 OCCASION OF HIS RECEIPT OF THE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

4 WHEREAS, hometown hero and former Biloxi Mayor Jeremiah
5 "Jerry" O'Keefe was one of the youngest Americans at age 21 to
6 become an Ace Fighter Pilot during World War II. He earned the
7 "ace" designation by shooting down seven enemy planes in one week;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, on June 5, 2015, he was presented the U.S.
10 Congressional Gold Medal during a celebration of the 150th
11 Anniversary of Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Homes; and

12 WHEREAS, only 1,447 Americans became Ace Fighter Pilots for
13 shooting down five or more enemy planes in aerial combat during
14 World Wars I and II, Korea or Vietnam. Jeffery O'Keefe, his son
15 and President of Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Homes, said his father
16 is one of only 72 aces still living to receive the medal,
17 Congress' highest civilian award. The *Sun Herald* archives in



18 detail O'Keefe's achievements, which were also written up in *Time*
19 *Magazine* and other national publications; and

20 WHEREAS, O'Keefe enlisted in the U.S. Navy after the attack
21 on Pearl Harbor and served from 1942-1943. After attending Flight
22 School, he became a Fighter Pilot with the U.S. Marine Corps from
23 1943-1945. A letter from the Secretary of the Navy praised his
24 actions of April 22, 1945: "Flying his plane aggressively in two
25 engagements against a total of more than 50 Japanese suicide dive
26 bombers, First Lieutenant O'Keefe pressed home a series of bold
27 attacks in the face of hostile fire to destroy five of the enemy
28 aircraft. He became an Ace Fighter Pilot during his first combat
29 fight over Okinawa"; and

30 WHEREAS, he flew a Corsair Fighter Plane and was a member of
31 the Death Rattlers Fighter Squadron of the 2nd Marine Aircraft
32 Division, one of the most decorated squadrons in World War II.
33 The entire squadron shot down 16 enemy planes. On April 28, 1945,
34 O'Keefe shot down two enemy planes bringing his total victories to
35 seven which made him the highest-scoring Ace Fighter Pilot in
36 Okinawa at the time; and

37 WHEREAS, Jerry O'Keefe went on to become a State Legislator,
38 President of Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Home for decades and a
39 Biloxi Mayor; and

40 WHEREAS, he was awarded the Navy Cross, the Distinguished
41 Flying Cross, the Air Medal and the Gold Star. He added the



42 Congressional Gold Medal for American Flying Aces to the
43 collection; and

44 WHEREAS, Jerry O'Keefe's legacy is a strong and free America,
45 and for this and for a lifetime of selfless service, a grateful
46 state thanks him:

47 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF
48 MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That
49 we do hereby salute the heroic World War II Fighter Pilot service
50 of former Biloxi Mayor Jerry O'Keefe on the occasion of his
51 receipt of the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal, and extend our
52 commendation to Jerry and his family on this auspicious occasion.

53 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to
54 Jerry O'Keefe, forwarded to the Biloxi City Council, and made
55 available to the Capitol Press Corps.

