

By: Senator(s) Fillingane, Butler (38th),  
Caughman, Frazier, Hill, Jackson (11th),  
McMahan, Michel, Thompson

To: Rules

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 59

1 A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE SERVICE AND LEGACY OF WORLD WAR  
2 II VETERAN HENRY "HOWARD" BENNETT OF SUMRALL, MISSISSIPPI, AND  
3 EXTENDING THE CONGRATULATIONS OF THE SENATE FOR HIS AWARD BY THE  
4 FRENCH GOVERNMENT OF THE MEDAL OF A LIBERATED FRANCE, THE LEGION  
5 OF HONOUR, FRANCE'S HIGHEST DEGREE OF MERIT, AND FOR HIS UPCOMING  
6 KNIGHTHOOD BY PRESIDENT MACRON OF FRANCE, AND EXTEND BEST WISHES  
7 ON HIS 100TH BIRTHDAY.

8 WHEREAS, World War II Veteran Henry "Howard" Bennett of  
9 Sumrall was awarded the Medal of a Liberated France at the State  
10 Veterans Home in Collins, Mississippi, on October 7th, 2021,  
11 presented on behalf of the French government. This medal is  
12 awarded to French, foreign nationals, and soldiers of allied  
13 armies who served and made a notable contribution to the  
14 liberation of France from the German occupation during World War  
15 II; and

16 WHEREAS, Bennett also received an American flag from  
17 Mississippi Veterans Affairs which flew over the State Capitol in  
18 his honor, awards from American Legion Post 90 in Columbia, of  
19 which Bennett is a member, and a new Military Challenge Coin



20 designed to honor Mississippi service members from Congressman  
21 Steven Palazzo; and

22 WHEREAS, Bennett has previously been awarded the  
23 Distinguished Flying Cross, an Air Medal with three Oak Leaf  
24 Clusters, and the Good Conduct Medal; and

25 WHEREAS, Bennett will be awarded the Legion of Honour,  
26 France's highest degree of merit, in the coming weeks; and

27 WHEREAS, Bennett will be knighted and receive a Certificate  
28 of Knighthood, signed by Emmanuel Macron, President of France; and

29 WHEREAS, we join the citizens of Lamar and Covington Counties  
30 in celebrating the service and legacy of a local World War II Hero  
31 and his upcoming 100th Birthday on December 22, 2022; and

32 WHEREAS, we applaud the sentiments of Keltoum Rowland,  
33 France's Honorary Consul to Mississippi, who stated: "I wanted to  
34 express my gratitude to Mr. Henry Howard Bennett. He is a hero.  
35 These men are our heroes, and France will never forget"; and

36 WHEREAS, we appreciate Congressman Steven Palazzo's  
37 statements while awarding the Medal of a Liberated France to  
38 Bennett when he proclaimed, "When we look back and we see all the  
39 things that we have...we owe it to one generation. You left  
40 everything - your farms, left your family - and you went over  
41 there and fought. And to be a nose gunner in a B-24 Liberator?  
42 Look, this isn't a ride at Walt Disney, this is the real  
43 deal....You got a front-row seat there, and to do that for 30  
44 missions?"; and



45           WHEREAS, Henry Howard Bennett joined the-then Army Air Corps,  
46 the predecessor to the Air Force, at the age of 20, signing up to  
47 fight the evils of tyranny during World War II. During his time  
48 as a soldier, Bennett was initially trained to be an aircraft  
49 engine mechanic before serving as a staff sergeant and nose gunner  
50 on a B-24 Liberator bomber, one of the most dangerous and  
51 vulnerable positions during battle, given its position at the very  
52 front tip of the aircraft. Regarding his position, Bennett  
53 jokingly likes to point out that he was always the first to see  
54 the action and the first to get out of it; and

55           WHEREAS, Bennett was part of several battles and campaigns  
56 while participating in 30 missions over Europe during his military  
57 career from 1943-1945, with perhaps none more memorable than his  
58 mission on June 6, 1944, when his B-24 bomber flew low over Omaha  
59 Beach during the invasion of Normandy on D-Day. Bennett says that  
60 D-Day etched horrible scenes in his memory which he will never  
61 forget. Despite the accolades he has received after going from  
62 being raised as one of 16 children on his family's farm near  
63 Sumrall, to fighting in World War II to liberate Europe, Bennett  
64 maintains that he was simply doing his duty. While recalling his  
65 time as a nose gunner, Bennett spoke of one mission over Berlin  
66 when his plane took a direct hit during a "barrage of  
67 anti-aircraft fire," that "sounded like hail on a tin roof."  
68 After his plane was hit, it rolled over and plunged "like a rock"  
69 before the crew was able to recover the plane, "at treetop level."



70 Bennett said, "By the hand of God, he wasn't ready for me yet";  
71 and

72 WHEREAS, Bennett's daughter, Sue Long, said at his ceremony  
73 receiving the Medal of a Liberated France, "It's a huge honor.  
74 We've always been very proud of him"; and

75 WHEREAS, Bennett's legacy of service to his state and  
76 country, along with that of his brother, William Albert "Dee"  
77 Bennett, who also bravely served his country in the United States  
78 Army during World War II, helped inspire future generations of his  
79 family to serve their country, including two nephews: Larry  
80 Bennett who served in the United States Army, and Timothy Bennett,  
81 who volunteered for service in the United States Marine Corps.  
82 Two nephews followed their uncles' lead in serving their country  
83 during wartime by both serving during the Vietnam War Era, and a  
84 third nephew, Wesley "Laverne" Bass, Jr., served 20 years in the  
85 United States Army; and

86 WHEREAS, Bennett married Gaye Stevens on November 5, 1943,  
87 shortly before his deployment to Europe. He was able to return  
88 home safely from the war to his wife with whom he has celebrated  
89 74 years of marriage; and

90 WHEREAS, we thank Henry Howard Bennett and his family,  
91 including four children, 11 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren,  
92 three great-great-grandchildren, and one surviving brother, Rennie  
93 Bennett, for his service; and



94           WHEREAS, Bennett's legacy is a strong and free Mississippi  
95 and United States of America, and for this and for his selfless  
96 heroic military service flying over Omaha Beach during the  
97 invasion of Normandy on D-Day, June 6th, 1944, and for each of the  
98 30 missions he flew over Europe, a grateful Nation and State thank  
99 him:

100           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
101 MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby recognize the service and legacy of  
102 World War II Hero Henry Howard Bennett of Sumrall, Mississippi,  
103 now residing at the State Veterans Home in Collins, and extend the  
104 congratulations of the Senate to Bennett and his family on the  
105 occasion of his receiving the Medal of a Liberated France, the  
106 upcoming bestowment of the Legion of Honour, France's highest  
107 degree of merit, and the upcoming bestowment of Knighthood for  
108 Bennett by President Macron of France, and we extend the best  
109 wishes of the Senate on his upcoming 100th Birthday on December  
110 22, 2022.

111           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
112 Henry Howard Bennett and his family, forwarded to Mississippi's  
113 Congressional delegation, and be made available to the Capitol  
114 Press Corps.

