SLS 19RS-3415 ORIGINAL

2019 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 142

BY SENATOR GATTI

1

COMMENDATIONS. Commends First Lieutenant John Stillmon Willis Jr. upon the celebration of his one hundredth birthday.

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2	To commend and recognize First Lieutenant John Stillmon Willis Jr. upon the celebration
3	of his one hundredth birthday and to record for posterity the extraordinary life he has
4	lived.
5	WHEREAS, it is with great pride that the Legislature of Louisiana has learned of the
6	joyous occasion of First Lieutenant John Stillmon Willis Jr.'s one hundredth birthday, and
7	it is only appropriate to commend him for his outstanding contributions and
8	accomplishments during his life; and
9	WHEREAS, John Stillmon Willis Jr. was born on June 2, 1919, to John Stillmon
10	Willis Sr. and Ada Kennon Willis; and
11	WHEREAS, he was reared in Doyline, Louisiana; and
12	WHEREAS, after graduating from Doyline High School, he attended Louisiana State
13	University from 1937 to 1940 and graduated with a degree in agronomy; and
14	WHEREAS, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Mr. Willis, a
15	member in the army infantry reserve as a lieutenant in the United States Army, volunteered
16	for pilot training and was transferred from the 82nd Army Infantry Division to the Army Air
17	Corps, in grade, as a second lieutenant; and
18	WHEREAS, he was assigned to the 452nd Bomb Group where he piloted a B-17

1	Flying Fortress from Deopham Green Airbase in Atleborough in Norfolk, England; and
2	WHEREAS, the 452nd Bomb Group hit strategic sites in Germany but also supported
3	the movement of ground forces across Europe after D-Day; and
4	WHEREAS, on June 6, 1944, D-Day, the Group bombed coastal defenses before the
5	landing; and
6	WHEREAS, upon reporting for duty, "We're losing this war." were the sobering
7	words he heard from a superior officer; and
8	WHEREAS, in the six months before D-Day, his B-17 group was suffering eighty-
9	three percent casualties; and
10	WHEREAS, when 2nd Lt. Willis first took to a cockpit in combat, B-17 crews that
11	completed twenty-five missions could return home, but later that number increased to thirty
12	and then thirty-five missions; and
13	WHEREAS, during his service, he had a humorous encounter with the famous
14	Lieutenant Colonel James "Jimmy" Doolittle, then commander of the 8th Air Force, and
15	previously of the famous "Doolittle's Raiders", that resulted in a surprise brand new B-17
16	Flying Fortress for 2 nd Lt. Willis; and
17	WHEREAS, while serving he was promoted to first lieutenant, and he and his crew
18	completed the magic number of thirty-five missions; and
19	WHEREAS, years later reflecting on the missions, he would say "A return home with
20	a hundred holes in the plane was not uncommon," and "It'd be a sea of fire that you had to
21	fly through. Red flashes and black smoke. Germans were good gunners. They'd put it in
22	your lap up there"; and
23	WHEREAS, 1st Lt. Willis credits the survival of his crew and himself to the fact that
24	the good Lord had his arms around them; and
25	WHEREAS, upon returning from the war, he worked in his father's lumber business
26	for twenty years; and
27	WHEREAS, he married the love of his life Lillian Mae Life, and their marriage
28	would span over fifty-four years until her death in 2006; and
29	WHEREAS, Mr. and Mrs. Willis had one daughter, Martha Lou Willis, and three
30	grandchildren; and

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1	WHEREAS, after working for his father, he then went to work for twenty years at
2	his father-in-law's hardware business, Webb Hardware in Minden, Louisiana; and
3	WHEREAS, many young children can remember the enjoyment of going to see him
4	and his wife at the hardware store and getting a ride on the freight elevator with its wooden
5	doors; and
6	WHEREAS, Mr. Willis was a longtime member of St. John's Episcopal Church in
7	Minden; and
8	WHEREAS, Mr. Willis recently celebrated his one hundredth birthday with a party
9	at St. John's Episcopal Church; and
10	WHEREAS, the success of the state of Louisiana, the strength of our communities,
11	and the overall vitality of American society depends upon people and veterans like First
12	Lieutenant John Stillmon Willis Jr.
13	THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
14	commend and recognize First Lieutenant John Stillmon Willis Jr. upon the wonderful
15	occasion of his one hundredth birthday, record for posterity the extraordinary life he has
16	lived, express enduring gratitude for his accomplishments and contributions he has made to
17	his family, friends, community, state, and the country, and extend to him every good wish
18	for health and happiness in the years to come.
19	BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to
20	First Lieutenant John Stillmon Willis Jr.
	The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by J. W. Wiley.

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Commends First Lieutenant John Stillmon Willis Jr. upon the celebration of his 100th birthday.