

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2017

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HOUSE RESOLUTION 970

Sponsors: Representative Davis.

For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: State and Local Government II

May 21, 2018

1 A HOUSE RESOLUTION URGING CONGRESS TO ENACT LEGISLATION DIRECTING
2 A FEDERAL AGENCY TO DESIGNATE AT LEAST ONE CITY IN THE UNITED
3 STATES EACH YEAR AN "AMERICAN WORLD WAR II HERITAGE CITY," WITH
4 WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA, AS THE FIRST CITY TO BE SO DESIGNATED.

5 Whereas, over the past few years, several members of Congress have introduced
6 legislation directing the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to designate at least one city in the United
7 States each year as an "American World War II Heritage City" based on the fact that many cities
8 across the United States contributed to the war effort during World War II; and

9 Whereas, the legislation set out the criteria for establishing the designation to be based
10 on the following: (1) contributions by a city to the war effort during World War II, including
11 those related to defense manufacturing, bond drives, service in the Armed Forces, and the
12 presence of military facilities within the city, and (2) efforts by a city to preserve the history of
13 the city's contributions during World War II, including through the establishment of preservation
14 organizations or museums, restoration of World War II facilities, and recognition of World War
15 II veterans; and

16 Whereas, the legislation suggested that the City of Wilmington should be designated
17 as the first "American World War II Heritage City" based upon the following findings:

- 18 (1) During World War II, Wilmington was the country's unique wartime
19 boomtown, aptly and officially named "The Defense Capital of the State."
20 (2) Wilmington based and trained all five military services which were the
21 predecessor to the air force at the Wilmington Airport, the Army at Camp
22 Davis and Fort Fisher, the Navy at Fort Caswell, the Coast Guard at
23 Wrightsville Beach, and the Marine Corps at Camp Lejeune.
24 (3) The North Carolina Shipbuilding Company of Wilmington, the State's largest
25 employer at that time with 23,000 employees, constructed 243 cargo vessels
26 which provided goods and equipment to our soldiers.
27 (4) Wilmington provided the following: the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad
28 headquarters; three housing camps for German prisoners of war; a major
29 training base for P-47 fighters; defense industries that produced goods and
30 equipment; a British patrol base; and a shipping point for "Lend-Lease"
31 supplies to the Allies.
32 (5) Wilmington dispatched thousands of area men and women to fight the enemy
33 on land, sea, and air as Navy frogmen, P-51 fighter aces, Tuskegee Airmen,
34 submarine skippers, bomber pilots, Marine riflemen, Army artillerymen,
35 physicians and nurses, and volunteers of all sorts.



1 (6) The Wilmington area lost 248 men as a result of their courageous efforts to
2 defend the United States, and two New Hanover High School graduates
3 received the Congressional Medal of Honor and numerous others received
4 high decorations for valor, including the Navy Cross, Distinguished Service
5 Cross, and Distinguished Flying Cross.

6 (7) Wilmington's strategic position made it vulnerable to enemy attack by German
7 U-boats, which marauded shipping off our beaches. In July 1943, in perhaps
8 the only German attack on the United States, a U-boat fired at the Ethel-Dow
9 chemical plant in Wilmington. Wilmington endured this attack, as well as
10 constant civilian defense restrictions and air raid drills, including black-outs
11 and dim-outs. The city's population more than doubled with the influx of
12 military personnel, forcing locals to cope with strain on housing and schools,
13 transportation, medical and social services, law enforcement, and food supply;
14 and

15 Whereas, further evidence that the City of Wilmington deserves to earn the first
16 designation as an "American World War II Heritage City" include the following:

17 (1) Since 1961, Wilmington has been home to the World War II Battleship North
18 Carolina, the State's memorial to its World War II dead now expanded as a
19 memorial to its subsequent veterans, and a major tourism attraction and public
20 venue.

21 (2) Wilmington is promoted as a World War II history tourism destination.

22 (3) Wilmington has honored its two World War II Medal of Honor recipients by
23 naming a middle school, city park, and city street for them as well as erecting
24 a memorial to them at New Hanover High School.

25 (4) In 2000, Wilmington established the World War II Wilmington Home Front
26 Coalition, a nonprofit corporation, whose mission is to identify, preserve, and
27 interpret the area's rich wartime legacy.

28 (5) Wilmington has saved, renovated, and restored its World War II USO
29 building, the Hannah Block Historic USO/Community Arts Center public
30 venue, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, and celebrated its
31 75th anniversary in 2016 with an original musical play.

32 (6) Other legacy accomplishments include memorial and markers; USO
33 style-big-band dances; veterans tributes and jamborees; national media
34 campaign including publication of two books and hundreds of articles; guide
35 maps of WWII sites and guided tours; annual Pearl Harbor commemorations;
36 exhibits; cultural and educational events; and earning preservation
37 achievement awards; and

38 Whereas, in order to preserve the City's rich heritage and vast contributions to World
39 War II, it is vital that the City of Wilmington be designated as an "American World War II
40 Heritage City"; Now, therefore,

41 Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

42 **SECTION 1.** The House of Representatives urges Congress to enact legislation
43 directing a federal agency to designate at least one city in the United States each year as an
44 "American World War II Heritage City" with Wilmington, North Carolina, as the first city to be
45 so designated.

46 **SECTION 2.** The Principal Clerk shall transmit a copy of this resolution to each
47 member of North Carolina's congressional delegation.

48 **SECTION 3.** This resolution is effective upon adoption.