**A** **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION**

TO HONOR AND CONGRATULATE U.S. ARMY SERGEANT MAJOR THOMAS PATRICK PAYNE ON BEING PRESENTED THE MEDAL OF HONOR, THE NATION’S HIGHEST AWARD FOR VALOR, FOR HEROIC ACTION DURING A TOUR OF MILITARY DUTY IN NORTHERN IRAQ AND TO EXPRESS TO HIM THE DEEPEST APPRECIATION OF A GRATEFUL STATE AND NATION FOR HIS LIFE, SACRIFICE, AND SERVICE.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina General Assembly, on behalf of all South Carolinians, acknowledge with deep appreciation the great sacrifice that the men and women of the United States Armed Forces make for the ideals of freedom and justice, which are so richly enjoyed in this nation; and

Whereas, Sergeant Major Thomas Patrick Payne of the United States Army stands high among those servicemen and women so honored by their country, his most recent recognition being the Medal of Honor, presented by President Donald Trump in a White House ceremony on September 11, 2020; and

Whereas, Sergeant Major Payne received the prestigious award, the nation’s highest award for valor, for his role in an operation to free approximately seventy captives on October 22, 2015. During this mission in northern Iraq, the then‑Sergeant First Class Payne led many out of the compound and went back in for one last man; and

Whereas, further, the mission was one of the largest hostage rescue operations in history. It was partially captured on a Kurdish soldier’s helmet camera, which shows Payne in a doorway leading a stream of captives out before going back to look for other survivors; and

Whereas, Sergeant Major Payne, an instructor assigned to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, grew up in Batesburg‑Leesville and Lugoff and graduated from high school in 2002. Part of the 9/11 generation, he felt a strong sense of duty to serve his country. After high school, he enlisted in the Army as an Infantryman 11B and completed the Basic Airborne Course at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 2002 and the Ranger Indoctrination Program (now known as the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program) in early 2003; and

Whereas, he was then assigned as a rifleman to A Company, 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, where he also served as a sniper and sniper team leader until November 2007, the year he was selected for assignment to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg. Since then, he has served within USASOC as a special operations team member, assistant team sergeant, team sergeant, and instructor. In 2012 at Fort Benning, he and his teammate won the Best Ranger Competition, a grueling contest that places extreme demands on buddy teams’ physical, mental, technical, and tactical skills as Rangers; and

Whereas, during his career, Sergeant Major Payne has deployed seventeen times in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, Operation Resolute Support, and to the U.S. Africa Command area of responsibility; and

Whereas, in addition to the Medal of Honor, Sergeant Major Payne’s awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal with Bronze “V” device and three Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart, Defense Meritorious Service Medal with two Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, and Meritorious Service Medal with one Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, among many others; and

Whereas, in 2017, Sergeant Major Payne graduated from Norwich University with a bachelor’s degree in strategic studies and defense analysis. Stationed at Fort Bragg, he finds strength for his labors in the strong support of his lovely wife, Alison, and their three charming children; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly counts it a great privilege to salute U.S. Army Sergeant Major Thomas Patrick Payne, one of the Palmetto State’s finest, and the members with one voice offer their grateful thanks to Almighty God for the dedicated, sacrificial service of this heroic son of South Carolina. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring:

That the members of the South Carolina General Assembly, by this resolution, honor and congratulate U.S. Army Sergeant Major Thomas Patrick Payne on being presented the Medal of Honor, the nation’s highest award for valor, for heroic action during a tour of military duty in northern Iraq and express to him the deepest appreciation of a grateful State and nation for his life, sacrifice, and service.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to U.S. Army Sergeant Major Thomas Patrick Payne.

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