

**No. R-405. House concurrent resolution honoring Zachariah Fike and his Purple Hearts Reunited organization.**

(H.C.R.316)

House concurrent resolution honoring Zachariah Fike and his Purple Hearts Reunited organization

Offered by: Representatives Strong of Albany, Branagan of Georgia, and Morrissey of Bennington

Whereas, Zachariah Fike of Georgia, Vermont, is a full-time member of the Vermont National Guard, having served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and his family's military service history dates to the Revolutionary War, and

Whereas, in 2009, his mother gave him someone else's Purple Heart medal as a Christmas gift, and although an avid collector of military memorabilia, he decided immediately to reunite the medal with its rightful owner, and

Whereas, although Zachariah Fike was deployed to Afghanistan a few days later, upon his return, now a Purple Heart recipient himself, and after much research, he returned the medal to the sister of the deceased World War II soldier to whom the Christmas gift Purple Heart originally belonged, and

Whereas, in 2012, as a result of this medal-returning experience, he established Purple Hearts Reunited (PHR), a nonprofit organization with a mission "to return lost or stolen military medals of valor to veterans or their families in order to honor their sacrifice to the nation," and

Whereas, medals are found in storage containers, pawn shops, and even trash receptacles, and

Whereas, PHR maintains an online database of missing medal owners, and

Whereas, some medals arrive unsolicited, and in other cases PHR has purchased the medal, and

Whereas, including purchasing, refurbishing, and framing the medal, as well as PHR's return ceremony, a typical return costs \$1,200.00, and

Whereas, the return ceremony is a dignified event at which a representative of the Military Order of the Purple Heart often offers historical remarks, and

Whereas, should it be impossible to return the medal to the wounded recipient or the soldier's family, PHR then arranges for permanent placement in a dignified home such as a museum, and

Whereas, Zachariah Fike has spent \$50,000.00 of his own funds for this cause, although PHR is conducting fundraising activities, and

Whereas, as of late-March 2016, PHR has returned 200 medals and is working on finding the home of over 300 others, an endeavor in which Zachariah Fike can take great pride, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly honors Zachariah Fike and his Purple Hearts Reunited organization, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Zachariah Fike in Georgia.