

Substitute for House Resolution No. 114.

A resolution to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Montford Point Marines.

Whereas, Over 5,000 African-Americans, free men and enslaved, served the American cause in the Revolutionary War, including members of the Continental Marines beginning in April 1776; and

Whereas, Despite this heroic service, the USMC followed a racially discriminatory policy of denying African Americans and Native-Americans the opportunity to serve as Marines from 1798-1942; and

Whereas, In 1940 while the United States prepared for war, millions of jobs in the defense industry were being created. Blacks seeking jobs in the growing defense industries suffered violence and discrimination; and

Whereas, Many black leaders, including A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the most widely known spokesperson for black working-class interests in the United States, met with Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration to demand that he sign an executive order banning discrimination against black workers in the defense industry. Randolph threatened to bring tens of thousands of marchers to Washington, D.C; and

Whereas, On June 25, 1941, days before the march was to occur, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which barred government agencies and federal contractors from refusing employment in industries engaged in defense production on the basis of race, creed, color, or national origin. It was the first Presidential decree issued on race since Reconstruction. The order required the armed services, including the Marine Corps, to recruit and enlist African Americans; and

Whereas, Recruiting for the "Montford Marines" began on June 1, 1942. Thousands of African American men, eager to serve, flocked to recruiting offices. The first black recruits received basic training at the segregated Camp Montford Point in Jacksonville, North Carolina. The 1,200 men in the quota were housed in prefabricated huts. Racism continued in the Marine Corps after the issuance of Executive Order 9981, reflecting society; and

Whereas, Railroad tracks divided white residents from the camp for African American troops. The black recruits were not allowed to enter the main base of nearby Camp Lejeune unless accompanied by a white Marine. By 1945, all drill instructors and many NCOs at Montford Point were African Americans; and

Whereas, Between 1942 and 1949, more than an estimated 20,000 men were trained at Montford Point. In July 1948, despite strong opposition, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981, which required the desegregation of the military. In 1949 Montford Point was deactivated, and new black recruits were sent to Parris Island and Camp Pendleton. During the Korean War, the United States Marine Corps fully integrated African Americans into combat units; and

Whereas, President Barack Obama signed into law legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal to the Montford Point Marines on November 23, 2011. This award recognizes the Montford Point Marines' contributions to the Marine Corps and the United States of America; and

Whereas, The Congressional Gold Medal was awarded to the Montford Point Marines on June 27, 2012. With the completion of this initiative, it will forever serve as a fitting symbol honoring the legacy of black Marines and the effect of Executive Order 8802 which allowed blacks to be recruited in the United States Marine Corps. It will also serve as a reminder of the

sacrifices of these 20,000 African American Marines who trained on the hallowed grounds of Camp Montford Point and went on to fight for the "Right to Fight". The Congressional Gold Medal serves to honor and solidify the dedication, perseverance, and bravery of the Montford Point Marines; and

Whereas, Approximately 75 years ago, African American men had the courage to accept a challenge that would change the course of history; men who paved the way for men who came from all walks of life, men who had to fight for the right to fight. They were true heroes who would go on to fight at Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Saipan, and the Marianas Islands just to name a few momentous battles. Some even paid the ultimate sacrifice by laying down their lives for this country and fellow Marines during a time of adversity and despondency when they were neither accepted by the Marines Corps nor their own country for which they served; and

Whereas, They endured racial discrimination and disrespect because of the color of their skin. These men fought and died for their country while at war. Despite their disparate treatment, these men proved themselves worthy of the title, Marine; and

Whereas, The sacrifices of these men, paved the way for other minorities and women to be integrated into the Marine Corps. By their sacrifice, Montford Point Marines engineered social and cultural change in the Marine Corps that created a lasting impact and has contributed to the success of the United States Marine Corps today; and

Whereas, Many members of this elite fighting group originated from or returned to the state of Michigan; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the members of this legislative body commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Montford Point Marines. We honor the Montford Point Marines for their receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal, for their sacrifices, and for their exemplary service to our state and the nation.