

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 27

BY STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

STATING FINDINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE AND HONORING THE SACRIFICE OF IDAHO  
CIVILIANS WHO SERVED ON WAKE ISLAND DURING WORLD WAR II.

Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Idaho:

WHEREAS, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, which propelled the United States into World War II, was followed five hours later and 2,000 miles to the west by an attack on Wake Island; and

WHEREAS, on Wake Island, civilian contractors were building a vital United States Navy base and refueling facility that the Japanese also needed in order to expand their operations in the Pacific Theater; and

WHEREAS, Morrison-Knudsen Company, a member of the Contractors Pacific Naval Air Bases consortium, was employing more than 1,100 American civilians who were skilled in heavy construction to build the naval base on Wake Island, including 225 civilians with Idaho connections; and

WHEREAS, many of the civilian contractors on Wake Island abandoned their tools and heavy construction equipment to aid the United States Marine Corps detachment during the 16-day siege and final battle against Japanese forces, during which 49 U.S. military personnel and 34 civilians were killed, including five Idahoans; and

WHEREAS, a United States Navy task force was dispatched from Pearl Harbor to rescue and reinforce the embattled civilian and military personnel on Wake Island, but it was ordered to abort shortly after Japanese forces landed on the island, leaving the Americans on their own and without hope of rescue; and

WHEREAS, Japanese forces eventually captured Wake Island and took all surviving Americans as prisoners of war (POWs), transporting more than 1,000 civilian and military POWs to Japan and China and forcing 98 POWs to remain on Wake Island and perform construction work for Japan, now the enemy of the United States; and

WHEREAS, 10 Idahoans were among the 98 civilian contractor POWs who were brutally executed on Wake Island by the Japanese on October 7, 1943, nearly two years after their capture and forced labor; and

WHEREAS, 17 Idaho civilian contractors died as slave prisoners of war in Japanese POW camps in China and Japan during the war; and

WHEREAS, the Japanese forces on Wake Island surrendered to U.S. forces on September 4, 1945; and

WHEREAS, in 1981 the United States Department of Defense recognized the civilians who contributed to the defense of Wake Island during World War II as eligible for military discharge, medals, and veterans' benefits; and

WHEREAS, Idaho became home to annual reunions of Wake Island survivors and their families until 2017; and

1           WHEREAS, Veterans Memorial Park in Boise honors those who served on Wake  
2 Island with a monument that notes: "The workers signed up for a job; they  
3 ended up fighting in a war."

4           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the Second Regular Ses-  
5 sion of the Sixty-eighth Idaho Legislature, the House of Representatives and  
6 the Senate concurring therein, that the Legislature recognizes and honors  
7 the sacrifice and faithful service to our country on Wake Island during World  
8 War II of Idaho's 225 civilians, 32 of whom lost their lives as a result of  
9 their service.