

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

SENATE RESOLUTION

COMMEMORATING THE 81ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE "FOUR CHAPLAINS", THE
FOUR MEN OF GOD WHO SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES DURING WORLD WAR II SO
THAT OTHERS MIGHT LIVE

Introduced By: Senator Leonidas P. Raptakis

Date Introduced: January 29, 2024

Referred To: Placed on the Senate Consent Calendar

1 WHEREAS, Just past midnight on February 3, 1943, the SS Dorchester, a United States
2 Army Troop ship laden with 900 troops, seamen and civilians, was passing through the brutally
3 cold waters of the North Atlantic, on its way to deliver support and materials to Allied bases in
4 Greenland. At 12:55 a.m., the SS Dorchester, located 100 miles from Greenland, was hit by a
5 torpedo fired from a German U-Boat. The massive explosion tore through the ship, causing an
6 immediate loss of life. The SS Dorchester began to list with water gushing into the lower decks of
7 the ship; and

8 WHEREAS, Those who survived the blast were quickly in a state of panic and confusion.
9 Hundreds of survivors hurried towards the deck and then struggled to find the lifeboats as the ship
10 began to sink. Few of the men were wearing life vests, and knew that the frigid waters of the
11 Atlantic below them meant an almost certain death; and

12 WHEREAS, In the midst of this chaos four Chaplains, George Fox, a Methodist Minister,
13 Alexander Goode, a Jewish Rabbi, Clark Poling, a Dutch Reformed Minister, and John
14 Washington, a Roman Catholic Priest, all First Lieutenants, rushed forward to help their fellow
15 shipmates. They began distributing the limited number of available life jackets and when it
16 became clear that there were not enough available life jackets, they gave up their own so that
17 others might live. They remained on deck until the end, assisting others, and were four of the 670
18 people who perished; and

19 WHEREAS, After the war, numerous memorials were created to honor these four

1 Chaplains. A stained glass window in the Pentagon Chapel is dedicated to their memory. In 1960,
2 Congress passed a law authorizing the President to posthumously award a decoration for
3 extraordinary heroism to the four Chaplains in honor of their actions. The Four Chaplains' Medal
4 was presented to their next of kin in 1961. They are also honored with inscriptions upon the Walls
5 of the Missing at an ABMC memorial, the place where the American government honors all
6 service members who were lost at sea. Finally, in the Battery on the southern tip of Manhattan
7 Island, stands the East Coast Memorial. On this site, overlooking New York Harbor, eight large
8 pylons stand with the names and service information of the 4,611 Americans, including the Four
9 Chaplains, who perished in the western waters of the Atlantic Ocean during World War II; now,
10 therefore be it

11 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby commemorates the
12 81st Anniversary of the "Four Chaplains", the four men of God who sacrificed their lives during
13 World War II so that others might live; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
15 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to Mr. Kasim J. Yarn, Director of the Rhode
16 Island Department of Veterans Affairs and Jane Deptula, Rhode Island Marine Corps League
17 Chaplain.

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