

**SENATE RESOLUTION  
1997-8612**

By Senators Franklin, Heavey, Horn, Schow, Wood, Anderson, Hale, Newhouse, Winsley, Bauer, Kohl, Loveland, Patterson, Fraser, Sheldon, Snyder, Thibaudeau, Wojahn and Jacobsen

WHEREAS, Today we are honored to have in our presence Mr. Vernon J. Baker, the first and only living African American to receive America's highest military award, the Medal of Honor, for heroism under fire in the Second World War; and

WHEREAS, 1st Lieutenant Baker, on April 5th and 6th, 1945, leading his platoon of twenty-five soldiers, demonstrated tremendous courage and took it upon himself to remove several enemy threats that stood between his platoon and their objective; and

WHEREAS, He put his own life in extreme jeopardy for the sake of his platoon and their mission; and

WHEREAS, Lt. Baker received the Distinguished Service Cross, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, as well as the Cross of Valor from the nation of Italy, and the Cross of Valor from the nation of Poland; and

WHEREAS, Despite the fact that 1.7 million African Americans served in the armed forces during the Second World War, they did not receive a single one of the 432 Medals of Honor awarded; and

WHEREAS, Upon review of this glaring fact nearly fifty years later, the United States Army determined that seven recipients of the Distinguished Service Medal truly were deserving of the military's highest honor, but had been denied it at the time most probably due to racial prejudice; and

WHEREAS, Of the seven new recipients of the Medal of Honor, Vernon J. Baker is the only survivor, and thus the only member of this illustrious group able to be so honored in person; and

WHEREAS, His service to his country in the United States Army continued for 28 years;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the members of the Washington State Senate do hereby honor and extend our most heartfelt congratulations and thanks to Mr. Vernon J. Baker of St. Maries, Idaho, for his outstanding service to his country, his courageous sacrifice on behalf of his comrades, and his important role in liberating Nazi-occupied Italy and in defending the cause of liberty both in Europe and at home; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we do hereby urge all citizens of the State of Washington to join us in so honoring Mr. Vernon J. Baker; and that the Secretary of the Senate do hereby immediately transmit a copy of this resolution to Mr. Baker and his family.

I, Mike O'Connell, Secretary of the Senate,  
do hereby certify that this is a true and  
correct copy of Senate Resolution 1997-8612,  
adopted by the Senate February 7, 1997.

MIKE O'CONNELL  
Secretary of the Senate