

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON RULES
Ken Cooley, Chair
ACR 62 (Voepel) – As Introduced April 5, 2021

SUBJECT: Harlem Hellfighters Day.

SUMMARY: Proclaims April 6, 2021, as Harlem Hellfighters Day. Specifically, **this resolution** makes the following legislative findings:

- 1) “Harlem Hellfighters” was a nickname for the 369th United States Infantry Regiment, formerly the 15th New York National Guard Regiment, an African American unit that earned its nickname for its combat actions on the battlefields of France in 1918.
- 2) Despite the distinguished service of African Americans in the Armed Forces of the United States dating back to the American Revolutionary War, they faced considerable racial prejudice and strong resistance regarding their deployment as combat troops as the United States Army mobilized in 1917 to fight World War I.
- 3) Although the May 1917 Selective Service Act specified that able-bodied American men of 21 to 30 years of age, inclusive, were eligible for induction “regardless of race,” the War Department initially planned to use African Americans only as manual labor troops, typically as cooks, stevedores, and drivers.
- 4) The Harlem Hellfighters’ combat record leaves no legitimate doubt about the patriotism, combat effectiveness, and fearlessness of African American soldiers. The unit spent 191 days at the front, never lost ground, and was the first Allied unit to reach the Rhine River. The unit suffered 1,500 casualties while fighting in the Second Battle of the Marne from July 15 to 18, 1918, inclusive and in the first month of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive from September 26 to November 11, 1918, inclusive.
- 5) The 369th’s casualties constituted about one-half of the 93rd Division’s losses of 3,167 total dead or wounded, despite being just one of four regiments in the division. The 369th was removed from its attachment to the French Army on December 18, 1918.
- 6) The regiment returned to the United States and demobilized on February 28, 1919, at Camp Upton, New York, and then was returned to the New York National Guard. Soldiers of the 93rd Division received more than 500 French and United States valor medals.

FISCAL EFFECT: None

COMMENTS: The author has proposed some minor amendments for the committee to consider for adoption. Specifically, the amendments do the following:

- 1) On page 2, in lines 1 and 2, strike out “Political pressure from civil rights organizations and African American leaders combine with increasingly” and insert “Increasingly”
- 2) On page 2, in line 26, strike out “(Colored)”

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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