



2023 South Dakota Legislature

House Commemoration 8001

Introduced by: **Representative Tordsen**

1 **A LEGISLATIVE COMMEMORATION, Honoring E. Royce Williams for his life,**
2 **achievement, and heroism as he is awarded the Navy Cross.**

3 WHEREAS, E. Royce Williams, a native of Wilmot, exemplifying the tenacity, perseverance,
4 and dedication to duty of a South Dakotan, and following the example of his father's military
5 service, was called to serve his country and enlist in the United States Navy after the attack
6 on Pearl Harbor; and

7 WHEREAS, on November 18, 1952, Williams, while serving in Fighter Squadron Seven
8 Hundred Eighty-One (VF-781) on the U.S.S. Oriskany, carried out an early morning bombing
9 run on the Hoeryong industrial complex near the Korean-Russian boarder which prompted
10 seven Soviet MiG-15 fighters to launch from a Soviet base near Vladivostok; and

11 WHEREAS, Williams and three other pilots, flying their F9F-5 Panthers as part of the
12 Combat Air Patrol in defense of Carrier Task Force 77, were dispatched in blizzard conditions
13 to intercept the seven MiG-15 fighters over the Sea of Japan; and

14 WHEREAS, Williams and his wingman were left alone to intercept the seven Soviet fighters
15 after the flight-leader had to be escorted back to the U.S.S. Oriskany following equipment
16 concerns with his aircraft; and

17 WHEREAS, Williams, outnumbered by superior aircraft and fighting for his life, was
18 engaged in a thirty-five-minute dogfight with the Soviets, where he expended all of his
19 ammunition shooting down four, possibly five, of the seven enemy fighters; and

20 WHEREAS, Williams, suffering from a hit from a thirty-seven millimeter shell that disabled
21 his electrical and hydraulic systems, in addition to two hundred and sixty-three other bullet
22 holes and being forced to dodge a few shots of friendly fire, was miraculously able to land his
23 fighter on the U.S.S. Oriskany; and

1 WHEREAS, the United States Navy awarded Williams a Silver Star in April 1953, and after
2 deeming the events classified for many years to help prevent further escalation of the war,
3 confirmed the unique nature of the heroic act, calling it, "the only direct overwater combat
4 between U.S. Navy fighters and Soviet fighters during the Cold War"; and

5 WHEREAS, Williams served in the Navy for more than thirty years, flew two hundred and
6 twenty missions in Korea and Vietnam, was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses, the
7 Medal of Valor, multiple Silver and Bronze Stars, the Legion of Merit with a Combat "V," and
8 retired in 1984; and

9 WHEREAS, Williams, after many years of investigation and evidence gathering, will be
10 presented with the Navy Cross, the United States Navy's second-highest honor, by the
11 Secretary of the Navy, Carlos Del Toro, at a ceremony in San Diego, California, on January
12 20, 2023:

13 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT COMMEMORATED, by the Ninety-Eighth Legislature of the State
14 of South Dakota, that E. Royce Williams, in recognition of a life of achievement, devotion to
15 duty, and heroism, has received the Navy Cross.