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# South Dakota Legislature



## House Commemoration 8012

*Introduced by: **Representatives** Goodwin, Baxter, Emery, Massie, Muckey, and Van Diepen and **Senators** Duhamel, Howard, Otten, Perry, Reed, and Zikmund*

**A LEGISLATIVE COMMEMORATION recognizing Captain Royce Williams for his exemplary military service and bravery in combat.**

WHEREAS, Royce Williams was raised on a farm near Wilmot, South Dakota, during the Great Depression, and he grew up embodying the values of hard work, courage, and leadership; and

WHEREAS, Royce Williams earned a commission in the United States Navy, became a naval aviator, and was assigned to fly the F9F Panther while on combat duty off the coast of North Korea in November of 1952; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Junior Grade Williams was on combat air patrol with a group of three other pilots on 18 November, 1952, when seven Soviet MiG-15s approaching the US fleet engaged the fighters; and

WHEREAS, three of the pilots were ordered to return to the USS Oriskany, but the Soviet MiG-15s had already fired upon Williams, who was engaged in aerial combat for the next thirty-five minutes, which is believed to be the longest dogfight in US Navy history, and Williams shot down four enemy aircraft and damaged two others before ultimately landing his aircraft back on the deck of the USS Oriskany; and

WHEREAS, the United States intercepted the Soviet Air Force's transmissions confirming the hostile intent on the US fleet, the attack, and the loss of Soviet aircraft, but due to the security classification, Lieutenant Junior Grade Williams was directed never to speak of the event, and knowledge of the event remained classified until 1990, after Williams retired with the rank of Captain following a distinguished career; and

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WHEREAS, in December, 2025, the Secretary of the Navy recommended upgrading Captain Williams' military decoration to the Medal of Honor, and the President of the United States personally called to inform Captain Royce Williams of his intent to award him the nation's highest honor for courage in the face of the enemy;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT COMMEMORATED, by the One Hundred First Legislature of the State of South Dakota, that Captain Royce Williams is recognized for his exemplary military career and bravery in combat.

