

BY: Senator MYRIE

COMMENDING Osceala Fletcher upon the occasion of his designation as recipient of a Liberty Medal, the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the New York State Senate

WHEREAS, Members of the Armed Services from the State of New York, who have served so valiantly and honorably in wars in which this country's freedom was at stake, as well as in the preservation of peace in peacetime, deserve a special salute from this Legislative Body; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commend Osceala Fletcher upon the occasion of his designation as recipient of a Liberty Medal, the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the New York State Senate; and

WHEREAS, The New York State Senate Liberty Medal was established by Resolution and is awarded to individuals who have merited special commendation for exceptional, heroic, or humanitarian acts on behalf of their fellow New Yorkers; and

WHEREAS, Osceala "Ossie" Fletcher's blood ran red like the rest of the American casualties on the beaches of Normandy nearly 80 years ago, but the color of his skin led to the denial of what others who survived the D-Day battle received, a Purple Heart; and

WHEREAS, The World War II hero from Crown Heights, Brooklyn, at age 99, finally received his Purple Heart at a special ceremony at Fort Hamilton Army Base in Brooklyn on Friday, June 18, 2021, a day before the first federally-recognized Juneteenth national holiday that ended slavery of African Americans after the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, Osceala Fletcher attended the ceremony with his wife Pauline, his daughter Jacqueline Streets, a dozen family members and one great grandson; the wheelchair-bound Army veteran, a crane operator in the 254th Port Battalion, was wounded three times, most notably during a German rocket attack; and

WHEREAS, The former private first class collected his medal from U.S. Army Chief of Staff General James McConville during the emotional ceremony, a long overdue recognition of the enormous sacrifices this brave man made for our nation and for free people everywhere; despite his inability to walk on his own, the nearly 100-year-old veteran insisted on standing during the ceremony's National Anthem; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, among those in attendance was Helen Patton, granddaughter of General George Patton; Henry Roosevelt, grandson of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who also produced a film about the survivors of D-Day entitled "6th of June", and members of the Comus Club of Brooklyn, a Black fraternal organization from Brooklyn; and

WHEREAS, During his valiant military service, Osceala Fletcher sailed to Europe from Portsmouth, Virginia aboard a segregated ship where Blacks were forced to stay below deck as they departed for the war; however, bullets made no racial distinction as 425,000 American soldiers were killed or wounded in 12 weeks of fighting the Nazi war machine; and

WHEREAS, Osceala Fletcher, who has spent his entire life giving to others, also served as a sergeant in the NYPD during his post-war years before retiring and becoming a social studies teacher in New York City public schools, as well as a community relations officer in the Brooklyn District Attorney's office; and

WHEREAS, Residents of this great State must never forget the courage with which these men and women served their country, and must recognize that no greater debt is owed than that owed to those who risked their lives for their beloved Nation; and

WHEREAS, Having exhibited his patriotism both at home and abroad, Osceala Fletcher demonstrated his love for his country and merits forevermore the highest respect of his State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, Our Nation's veterans deserve to be recognized, commended and thanked by the people of the State of New York for their service and for their dedication to their communities, their State and their Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend Osceala Fletcher upon the occasion of his designation as recipient of a Liberty Medal, the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the New York State Senate; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Osceala Fletcher.