

BY: M. of A. Jensen

CELEBRATING the life and legacy of Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch, meritorious Vietnam Veteran, Medal of Honor recipient, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, Within every community of the State of New York there are certain individuals who, by virtue of their commitment and dedication, command the respect and admiration of their community for their exemplary contributions and service on behalf of others; Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch was one such individual; and

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch of Rochester, New York, died on Sunday, December 26, 2021, at the age of 74; and

WHEREAS, Born August 29, 1947, Gary Burnell Beikirch grew up on Genesee Park Boulevard in Rochester, New York; he graduated from Greece Olympia High School in 1965, and briefly attended SUNY Brockport before enlisting in the United States Army in 1967; and

WHEREAS, In 1970, 22-year old Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch was serving as Chief Medical Officer for a Special Forces team and more than 2,000 villagers in Kon Tum province in South Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, During the early morning hours of April 1, 1970, North Vietnamese forces launched a major attack against Camp Dak Seang, spraying rockets and gunfire across the fortified compound; without hesitation or regard for his own safety, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch, along with his 15-year-old bodyguard, a Vietnamese boy named Dao, dashed repeatedly into the line of fire to help those who were wounded despite his own significant wounds; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch was hit twice, and the second time was a devastating blow which left shrapnel in his spine; during this time, Dao carried him to the medical tent for aid, before these two brave young men selflessly returned to the field; and

WHEREAS, A true American hero, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch continued to provide medical assistance to his fellow soldiers and local allies even with these devastating injuries before he was once again struck, this time with a gunshot to the back; he was then finally evacuated by helicopter; and

WHEREAS, Upon the completion of his valiant military service, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch learned to walk again through extensive rehabilitation and lived for several years in remote New Hampshire and Maine, studying theology; and

WHEREAS, With a steadfast and unwavering commitment to his country, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch often recalled his experience in Vietnam as deeply immersive and rooted in service; he communicated with the Vietnamese people in their own language and served as a kind of general practice doctor during the war, delivering babies one day and amputating limbs after a military skirmish the next; and

WHEREAS, On October 15, 1973, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch proudly received the Congressional Medal of Honor, the United States military's highest decoration, from President Richard Nixon; and

WHEREAS, Gary B. Beikirch moved back to Rochester in 1979, and took a job as a middle school counselor in the Greece Central School District, a position he held for more than 30 years; he considered it a way to pay his debt to Dao, the 15-year-old boy who saved his life; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, this extraordinary man became an ordained Baptist Pastor and worked with other veterans for many years, including as Executive Director of the Veterans Outreach Center; and

WHEREAS, In 1982, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch returned to Vietnam as part of a veteran's group; he also volunteered for numerous veteran, church, and community organizations, including the Veterans Outreach Center, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Board, NYS Council VVA, Special Olympics, Open Door Mission, and Cephas Attica; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch was often asked to be the keynote speaker at local colleges and ROTC Commissioning Services, as well as various community events; he was recently appointed Chaplin of the Medal of Honor Society; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch is survived by his wife, Loreen, and their three children, Stephanie (Robert) Zimmerli, Stephen Beikirch and Sarah (Andrew) Hinds, as well as 14 grandchildren and one great-grandchild; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch will be fondly remembered by family, friends and fellow soldiers for his compassion, leadership, selflessness and courage; and

WHEREAS, Residents of New York State and this great Nation will never forget the contributions and sacrifices of Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch, a devoted hero who dedicated his life to serving our country as a member of its esteemed armed forces; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life and legacy of Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch, and to extend its condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Sergeant Gary B. Beikirch.