

Senate Resolution No. 297

BY: Senator SEPULVEDA

COMMENDING Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell in recognition of his prompt and heroic actions in protecting the members of Congress and their staff while the United States Capitol was under attack on January 6, 2021

WHEREAS, Citizens across our State and Nation are inspired by and indebted to our noble police officers who exhibit courage and bravery every day in the course of their duties; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend the caring concern and heroic acts of individuals who take prompt and appropriate action in emergency situations, nobly risking their own lives to preserve the life and property of another; Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell is one such individual; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commend and pay just tribute to Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell in recognition of his prompt and heroic actions in protecting the members of Congress and their staff while the United States Capitol was under attack on January 6, 2021; and

WHEREAS, After immigrating from the Dominican Republic to the United States in 1992, Aquilino Gonell fulfilled the American dream by becoming a United States citizen and a college graduate; and

WHEREAS, Aquilino Gonell proudly served his country as a member of the United States Army during Operation Iraqi Freedom, followed by the Army Reserve; during his deployment, this brave and selfless soldier volunteered to conduct supply missions for the United States, allied forces and local Iraqi schools through the threat of bomb-filled roads; and

WHEREAS, Upon the completion of his military duties, Aquilino Gonell joined the Capitol Police Department in Washington, D.C., and once again, took the oath to defend and protect the Constitution of the United States; and

WHEREAS, On January 6, 2021, following the defeat of then-United States President Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election, a mob of his supporters attacked the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. to prevent a joint session of Congress from counting the electoral college votes to formalize the victory of President-elect Joe Biden; and

WHEREAS, Heeding the call to defend the United States Capitol and members of Congress, Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell quickly found himself immersed in the violence and mayhem enacted upon our government; and

WHEREAS, Even though he knew what a dangerous situation he and so many of his fellow officers were in, Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell charged forward and was caught in a tunnel on the West Front, where he engaged in some of the most brutal fighting of the day; and

WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell was hit with so much chemical sprays that the liquid soaked through to his skin and he sustained multiple injuries, several of which he is still recovering from; and

WHEREAS, Hours into the attack on the Capitol, Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell later learned that his wife and relatives were trying desperately to contact him, but it was not until 4:26 p.m. that he had a chance to text his wife to let her know he was alive; he made it home at 4:00 a.m. the next day and only four hours later, at 8:00 a.m., he was already on his way back to the Capitol, and continued to work for 15 consecutive days until after the inauguration of President Joe Biden; and

WHEREAS, On July 27, 2022, Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell and three of his fellow officers bravely revisited the horror of that cold January day, emotionally testifying before Congress about the events that took place at the United States Capitol Building; and

WHEREAS, Today, Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell continues to heal, both mentally and physically, from the injuries he sustained while defending the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; and

WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell, through his spontaneous and heroic actions, demonstrated his character and his compassion for the welfare of others, personifying, by virtue of his actions, the collective concern of law enforcement officers who respond naturally when others need help; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when individuals of such noble aims and actions are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State and Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell in recognition of his prompt and heroic actions in protecting the members of Congress and their staff while the United States Capitol was under attack on January 6, 2021; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Staff Sergeant Aquilino Gonell.