

BY: Senator ASHBY

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim February 12, 2023, as Operation Homecoming Recognition Day in the State of New York

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to pay the highest tribute to the members of the United States Armed Forces during times of crisis who have so faithfully served their community and country with courage and commitment contributing to the safety and welfare of others and the preservation of the freedoms and democratic principles upon which this State and Nation are founded; and

WHEREAS, The dedication and sacrifices of our military personnel ensure our continued role as a Nation which embodies the ideals of democracy, and which is a defender of liberty for peoples throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim February 12, 2023, as Operation Homecoming Recognition Day in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Operation Homecoming was the return of 591 American prisoners of war (POWs) held by North Vietnam following the Paris Peace Accords that officially ended U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, On January 27, 1973, Henry Kissinger, then assistant to President Richard Nixon for national security affairs, agreed to a ceasefire with representatives of North Vietnam which provided for the withdrawal of American military forces from South Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, The agreement also postulated for the release of nearly 600 American prisoners of war held by North Vietnam and its allies within 60 days of the withdrawal of U.S. troops; the deal would come to be known as Operation Homecoming and was divided into three phases; and

WHEREAS, The first phase required the initial reception of prisoners at three release sites: POWs held by the Viet Cong (VC) were to be flown by helicopter to Saigon, POWs held by the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) were released in Hanoi and the three POWs held in China were to be freed in Hong Kong; and

WHEREAS, The former prisoners were to then be flown to Clark Air Base in the Philippines where they were to be processed at a reception center, debriefed, and receive a physical examination; the final phase was the relocation of the POWs to military hospitals; and

WHEREAS, On February 12, 1973, three C-141 transports flew to Hanoi, North Vietnam, and one C-9A aircraft was sent to Saigon, South Vietnam to pick up released prisoners of war; the first flight of 40 U.S. prisoners of war left Hanoi in a C-141A, which later became known as the "Hanoi Taxi"; and

WHEREAS, From February 12th until April 4, 1973, 54 C-141 missions flew out of Hanoi, bringing the former POWs home; and

WHEREAS, Of the POWs repatriated to the United States, a total of 325 served in the United States Air Force, a majority of which were bomber pilots shot down over North Vietnam or VC controlled territory; the remaining 266 consisted of 138 United States Naval personnel, 77 soldiers serving in the United States Army, 26 United States Marines, and 25 civilian employees of American government agencies; and

WHEREAS, American former Prisoners of War are heroes whose service to our country will never be forgotten; these brave men and women fought for their country and endured cruelties and deprivation as they helped to protect our Nation; and

WHEREAS, The freedoms and security we cherish as Americans come at a very high price for those serving in the military in times of conflict; it is fitting and proper that we who are the beneficiaries of those who risk their lives, leaving their families behind, express our appreciation and eternal gratitude for their sacrifices and courageous acts; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim February 12, 2023, as Operation Homecoming Recognition Day in the State of New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York.