

Senate Resolution No. 1131

BY: Senator ROLISON

POSTHUMOUSLY honoring the life and service of United States Army Air Forces Staff Sergeant Eugene J. Darrigan who was laid to rest in his hometown of Wappingers Falls, New York, on May 24, 2025, more than eight decades after his death in World War II

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, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize and honor the memory and sacrifice of those who served with courage and distinction in our nation's armed forces; and

WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Eugene J. Darrigan, a proud native son of the Village of Wappingers Falls, Dutchess County, New York, served with great bravery as a radio operator in the United States Army Air Forces during World War II; and

WHEREAS, On March 11, 1944, while serving aboard the B-24 bomber "Heaven Can Wait," Staff Sergeant Darrigan and 10 fellow crew members were tragically killed in action when their aircraft was struck by enemy fire and crashed off the coast of New Guinea; and

WHEREAS, For 81 years, the remains of the "Heaven Can Wait" crew were deemed unrecoverable, lost in the depths of the Pacific Ocean; and

WHEREAS, Through the extraordinary efforts of Project Recover-a nonprofit organization dedicated to locating and returning missing American service members-in partnership with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) and researchers from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, the wreckage of the aircraft was located in 2017 following an extensive underwater search; and

WHEREAS, In 2023, the DPAA launched its deepest-ever underwater recovery mission, deploying elite Navy divers in a pressurized bell to recover remains and artifacts from the crash site over 200 feet below the ocean's surface; and

WHEREAS, Among the recovered items were dog tags bearing the name of Staff Sergeant Eugene J. Darrigan, linking the remains to this heroic airman and restoring his place in history; and

WHEREAS, On May 24, 2025, Staff Sergeant Eugene J. Darrigan was finally laid to rest with full military honors in his hometown of Wappingers Falls, with more than 200 members of the community, family, and fellow citizens paying their respects; and

WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Eugene J. Darrigan left behind a loving

wife, Florence Schindler, and a young son, Thomas D. Schindler, both of whom have since passed; he is survived by grandchildren and extended family members, including his niece, Virginia Pineiro, who solemnly accepted the folded flag in his honor; and

WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Eugene J. Darrigan's return home represents a profound and long-awaited homecoming, not only for his family, but for the grateful community of Wappingers Falls and the nation he served; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor United States Army Air Forces Staff Sergeant Eugene J. Darrigan posthumously, recognizing his selfless service, supreme sacrifice, and long-overdue return, and to express the heartfelt gratitude of the people of New York State; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Staff Sergeant Eugene J. Darrigan, as a symbol of our enduring respect and remembrance.