

Senate Resolution No. 2035

BY: Senator ASHBY

COMMENDING United States Army Air Corps 2nd Lieutenant Joseph L. Burke posthumously upon the occasion of his designation as a recipient of the Liberty Medal, the highest honor bestowed upon an individual by the New York State Senate

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and honor those distinguished individuals whose service to this Nation and the State of New York exemplifies the highest standards of courage, sacrifice, and devotion to duty; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend United States Army Air Corps 2nd Lieutenant Joseph L. Burke posthumously upon the occasion of his designation as a recipient of the 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, Joseph Leroy Burke, affectionately known as "Roy," was born in February 1914 and raised in Troy, New York, the beloved son of William J. Burke and Kathryn Agnes Burke; and

WHEREAS, A graduate of Catholic Central High School in 1932, Joseph L. Burke furthered his education at Siena College and, through the Civilian Pilot Training Program, demonstrated early his passion for aviation and service to his country; and

WHEREAS, In 1940, he answered the call to duty by entering the United States Army Air Corps as a cadet pilot, completing rigorous training at the Chicago School of Aeronautics and the U.S. Army Advanced Flying School at Maxwell Field, Alabama, and earning his commission as a Second Lieutenant and designation as a pursuit pilot in April 1941; and

WHEREAS, Joseph L. Burke was assigned to the 3rd Pursuit Squadron, 24th Pursuit Group, in the Philippines, where he stood ready in defense of freedom during a time of mounting global conflict; and

WHEREAS, Following the outbreak of hostilities in the Pacific during World War II, and after the destruction of his squadron's aircraft, he continued to serve with valor, ultimately fighting as part of the defense of Corregidor before its fall in May 1942; and

WHEREAS, Captured by enemy forces, Joseph L. Burke endured the brutal conditions of captivity as a Prisoner of War at Cabanatuan, exemplifying extraordinary resilience and fortitude in the face of

hardship; and

WHEREAS, In January 1945, while being transported with fellow American prisoners aboard unmarked vessels, Lieutenant Burke was tragically killed when the transport ship was attacked, an event which claimed the lives of hundreds of American service members; and

WHEREAS, For decades, his remains were listed among the unknown, and he was memorialized on the Wall of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Through the dedicated efforts of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and the advancement of DNA technology, his remains were positively identified in 2025, bringing long-awaited closure to his family and restoring his name to his sacrifice; and

WHEREAS, On Friday, May 1, 2026, the New York Army National Guard Honor Guard solemnly welcomes United States Army Air Corps 2nd Lieutenant Joseph L. Burke home to the Capital Region, conducting a dignified transfer of his remains at Albany International Airport, thereby honoring his service with the respect and reverence he so richly deserves; and

WHEREAS, Joseph L. Burke's legacy is one of unwavering patriotism, selfless service, and ultimate sacrifice, and his life stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of those who have defended the freedoms we cherish; and

WHEREAS, Having exhibited his patriotism both at home and abroad, Joseph L. Burke 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 United States Army Air Corps 2nd Lieutenant Joseph L. Burke posthumously upon the occasion of his designation as a recipient of the Liberty Medal, the highest honor bestowed by the New York State Senate; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of United States Army Air Corps 2nd Lieutenant Joseph L. Burke.