

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION directing the Transportation Cabinet to designate a
2 portion of United States Route 460 in Pike County in memory of Thomas Epling.

3 WHEREAS, Thomas Epling was born on August 20, 1930, in Breaks, Virginia, the
4 son of James Epling, Sr. and Roma Looney Epling; and

5 WHEREAS, in 1951, Thomas Epling answered his country's call to service, joining
6 the United States Army and serving as a combat medic as a member of the 5th
7 Regimental Combat Team assigned to the 24th and 25th Divisions of the United States
8 Army during the Korean War; and

9 WHEREAS, while caring for his fellow soldiers, Thomas Epling was involved in
10 significant fighting and was wounded on two occasions, eventually achieving the rank of
11 Sergeant, and was awarded two Bronze Stars for bravery under fire, as well as the
12 Combat Medic Badge, a Unit Citation, and the Korean Service Medal; and

13 WHEREAS, following his military service, Thomas Epling returned to the United
14 States and went to work, which for him, like many Eastern Kentuckians of his generation,
15 meant heading north to work at General Motors in Flint, Michigan; and

16 WHEREAS, feeling the pull of home, Thomas Epling returned home to
17 Southwestern Virginia and Eastern Kentucky and began his career in the coal industry
18 with his brother, Bill Jack Epling, as owners and operators of Pounding Mill Coal
19 Company in Blackberry, Kentucky, where they provided numerous jobs to the people in
20 the area; and

21 WHEREAS, although he retired in the late 1970s from the surface mining industry,
22 Thomas Epling remained a beloved "boss" to his former employees at Pounding Mill for
23 the remainder of his life; and

24 WHEREAS, even though Thomas Epling's career in the coal industry ended, he
25 never fully retired from life, with his interests leading him into ventures in equipment
26 sales, trucking, car sales, and especially the Bluebird Wanderlodge motor home; and

27 WHEREAS, Thomas Epling was an avid fan of the Bluebird Wanderlodge and

1 traveled extensively with his wife Jean to meet up with fellow enthusiasts from across the
2 nation, and he was proud to be considered as an expert "certified Bluebird Mechanic";
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Thomas Epling was a member of the Caney Creek Freewill Baptist
5 Church, as well as a life member of the Family Motor Coach Association and a member
6 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars; and

7 WHEREAS, Thomas Epling was the devoted husband of the late Emma Jean
8 (Yates) Epling, and a loving father and grandfather; a rock for his only daughter Crystal
9 from the day she came into this world until the time he left it, constantly showing his
10 support, welcoming his son-in-law, Phillip Wheeler, into the family like his own son, and
11 dotting on grandson Weston Charles Thomas Wheeler, who became his "best buddy"; and

12 WHEREAS, Thomas Epling departed this earthly life on April 20, 2022,
13 surrounded by his family whom he loved dearly, and the loss of this man who never
14 knew a stranger and whose ability to make lifelong friendships belied his motto, "Treat
15 people good and don't hurt yourself," will be felt far beyond the mountains of Appalachia
16 he called home; and

17 WHEREAS, it is fitting that the extraordinary life of Thomas Epling be recognized
18 in a tangible way;

19 NOW, THEREFORE,

20 ***Be it resolved by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:***

21 ➔Section 1. The Transportation Cabinet shall designate United States Route 460
22 in Pike County, from mile point 6 to mile point 14, as the "Korean War Veteran Sergeant
23 Thomas Epling Memorial Pike County Industry and Technology Corridor" and shall,
24 within 30 days of the effective date of this Resolution, erect appropriate signage. This
25 designation shall supersede any previous designations on this portion of highway.