

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION designating the PFC Ernie West Memorial Highway in  
2 Greenup County.

3 WHEREAS, Ernest Edison "Ernie" West was born in Russell, Kentucky, on  
4 September 2, 1931, and, orphaned as a child, grew up at the Masonic Children's Home in  
5 Versailles, Kentucky; and

6 WHEREAS, Ernie West was drafted into the United States Army in 1950,  
7 completed basic training in Hawaii, and was dispatched to the front lines in Korea as a  
8 private first class with the 14th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division; and

9 WHEREAS, on October 12, 1952, PFC Ernie West was the point man on a night  
10 patrol tasked with destroying an enemy outpost when the patrol was ambushed while  
11 climbing a hill, suffering numerous casualties; and

12 WHEREAS, observing his wounded lieutenant lying in an exposed position, PFC  
13 Ernie West ordered the troops to withdraw, then braved intense fire to reach and assist  
14 him. While attempting evacuation, he was attacked by three hostile soldiers employing  
15 grenades and small-arms fire. Quickly shifting his body to shelter the officer, he killed  
16 the assailants with his rifle, then carried his lieutenant to safety. Although critically  
17 wounded, he courageously returned through withering fire and bursting shells to assist  
18 the wounded. While evacuating two comrades, he killed three more of the enemy; and

19 WHEREAS, upon returning from the action, PFC Ernie West later told military  
20 historians, "I didn't even know I was hurt until we got back. One of the guys said,  
21 'You're bleeding, Ernie.' And I said, 'Hell, it's just a little bit of bite.' One of them aid  
22 men came over and he said, 'You got an eye missing.' And I said, 'Well, you're crazy.' ";  
23 and

24 WHEREAS, for his actions that day, PFC Ernie West was awarded the Medal of  
25 Honor, with the citation for the award noting that he "distinguished himself by  
26 conspicuous gallantry above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy.  
27 PFC West's indomitable spirit, consummate valor, and intrepid actions inspired all who

1 observed him, reflect the highest credit on himself, and uphold the honored traditions of  
2 the military service"; and

3 WHEREAS, PFC Ernie West planned to decline the medal until being convinced  
4 otherwise, later saying, "I wasn't going to go get it. I thought everybody ought to have  
5 one. I do not consider myself a hero, I was doing what I was supposed to do"; and

6 WHEREAS, at his Medal of Honor ceremony, President Dwight Eisenhower, when  
7 presenting PFC Ernie West, shook his head in wonder as he placed the medal's blue  
8 ribbon around his neck, telling him, "In addition to the decoration, which is the highest  
9 we have, I want to express an old soldier's admiration"; and

10 WHEREAS, after his military service was completed, Ernie West returned to  
11 Wurtland, Kentucky, where he married Gwendolyn Jane Stafford, who would be his  
12 partner until her death in 2012; and

13 WHEREAS, in addition to his job at the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, Ernie West  
14 coached youth football and basketball and was elected mayor of Wurtland, where he  
15 worked tirelessly to expand water service; and

16 WHEREAS, Ernie West left these earthly bounds on May 1, 2021, and was laid to  
17 rest in the state veterans cemetery in Greenup County for which he helped secure land  
18 and funding;

19 NOW, THEREFORE,

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

21 ➔Section 1. The Transportation Cabinet shall designate Kentucky Route 503 in  
22 Greenup County, from the intersection with Kentucky Route 207 (mile point 5.481) to  
23 the intersection with Kentucky Route 3105 (mile point 9.287) as the "PFC Ernie West  
24 Memorial Highway" and shall, within 30 days of the effective date of this Resolution,  
25 erect appropriate signs denoting this designation. Signs erected under this section shall  
26 indicate that PFC Ernie West was a Medal of Honor recipient. This designation shall  
27 supersede any previous honorary designation for this section of highway.