

House Resolution 998

By: Representatives Smyre of the 135th, Smith of the 134th, Hugley of the 136th, Pezold of the 133rd, and Buckner of the 137th

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing and honoring the establishment of Fort Benning on its centennial anniversary;
2 and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, on April 4, 1917, the day after President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress to
4 issue a Declaration of War against Germany, Columbus, Georgia, and the Columbus
5 Chamber of Commerce started working towards having an Army camp with at least a brigade
6 of troops; and

7 WHEREAS, a committee of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce voyaged to Washington,
8 D.C., to promote Columbus as a site for one of its new camps but was met with little success,
9 and several members of the committee remained in the nation's capital to speak with War
10 Department officials and members of Congress until February, 1918, when they returned
11 home, saddened by what seemed to be futile efforts; and

12 WHEREAS, unbeknownst to them, on October 21, 1917, General John J. Pershing,
13 Commander of the American Expeditionary Force in France, sent a cablegram to the War
14 Department asking for better trained soldiers, and due to reports from other high-ranking
15 field officers and the high numbers of battlefield casualties, the War Department decided to
16 create a Special Board to select a site to train soldiers in infantry skills and tactics; this board
17 was headed by Colonel Henry E. Eames, Commander of the School of Musketry at Fort Sill,
18 Oklahoma; and

19 WHEREAS, Columbus, Georgia, was selected as one of four prospective sites, largely due
20 to the hard efforts of the Chamber's Encampment Committee; and

21 WHEREAS, when the Columbus Chamber of Commerce officials learned that the school
22 would be created, a full-time representative was sent to Washington, D.C., to promote
23 Columbus' cause, and he telegraphed home on August 17, 1918, to say that the general staff

24 of the United States Army had approved the recommendation of having an investigative
25 board and that the Infantry School of Arms would be located near Columbus; and

26 WHEREAS, Major J. Paul Jones was assigned as Construction Quartermaster for the project,
27 and although no funds had been allocated and nothing had been formally approved by the
28 Secretary of War, Major Jones received word on September 20, 1918, that the Infantry
29 School staff and troops from Fort Sill were leaving for Columbus and would arrive on
30 October 1, 1918; and

31 WHEREAS, with great haste, and with the willing help of the Columbus Chamber of
32 Commerce, Major Jones and Colonel Eames began looking for a site for the coming camp;
33 and

34 WHEREAS, an 84 acre farm belonging to Alex Reid on Macon Road was selected for the
35 location of the camp due to its close proximity to downtown Columbus, to a city water
36 supply, and to streetcar service; and

37 WHEREAS the first detachment arrived on October 7, 1918, and on October 19, 1918, the
38 new facility was formally christened Camp Benning; and

39 WHEREAS, visionary citizens of Columbus, Georgia, and the Columbus Chamber of
40 Commerce displayed the foresight, vision, and leadership to fight to establish Camp Benning
41 near Columbus, Georgia.

42 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
43 the members of this body recognize and honor the establishment of Fort Benning on its
44 centennial anniversary.

45 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
46 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the
47 public and the press.