

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 266

By Casada

A RESOLUTION to commemorate the life of Specialist Benjamin David Leftrick on the occasion of a bridge being named in his honor.

WHEREAS, many courageous Tennesseans serve in this nation's armed forces; when necessary, these brave soldiers are deployed overseas to further the cause of democracy and protect the American way of life; and

WHEREAS, while they serve their country with valor in combat, they are often scarred by this harrowing experience and continue to suffer from unseen wounds after they return home; and

WHEREAS, such is the story of Specialist Benjamin David Leftrick, Tennessee Army National Guard, who survived two tours of combat duty only to succumb to post-traumatic stress (PTS) after returning to Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Ben Leftrick was named after his second cousin, godfather, and personal hero, Colonel Ben Williams, U.S. Army, Retired, and he dreamed of becoming a soldier during his formative years; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from high school at the age of seventeen, Ben joined the U.S. Army with his father's permission, and in the spring of 2008, he departed for Fort Benning, Georgia, to receive infantry training; he refused a signing bonus so he could return to his home state and serve with the Tennessee Army National Guard; and

WHEREAS, as a member of the 278<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment, Ben Leftrick was deployed to Iraq in 2009 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; he served with distinction as a driver/gunner of an armored vehicle providing security escort for convoys of U.S. troops leaving the combat zone; and

WHEREAS, returning home in July 2010, he could have remained in the 278<sup>th</sup> and stayed stateside, but instead, in the true spirit of the Volunteer State, Ben applied for and was granted a transfer to another Tennessee National Guard unit that was scheduled to deploy; and

WHEREAS, after receiving training at Fort Gordon, Georgia, Specialist Leftrick was deployed to Afghanistan in July 2011 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom as a member of the 230<sup>th</sup> Signal Company; he served honorably as a dual task soldier, providing unit security for his fellow soldiers and assisting with the construction and equipping of communications centers at forward operating bases in the combat zone; and

WHEREAS, during this second deployment, Ben Leftrick began experiencing post-traumatic stress and depression and underwent counseling through the Army's Warrior Recovery Unit in Afghanistan before returning home in July 2012; and

WHEREAS, on October 1, 2012, Ben Leftrick lost his battle with PTS, taking his own life, and was laid to rest with full military honors on October 5, 2012; and

WHEREAS, Specialist Leftrick's loyal and gallant service to his country reflects great credit upon this young man; his tragic passing should inspire this nation to redouble its efforts to more effectively treat PTS, a disease that takes our sons and daughters after they have given their all for America; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly is naming a bridge spanning Johnson Hollow Road on State Route 840 at mile marker 22 to honor the memory of Specialist Ben Leftrick and his life of purpose and commitment; and

WHEREAS, the number 22 has great significance in this context, as Ben Leftrick was a mere 22 years of age when he succumbed to PTS, and an average of 22 veterans per day commit suicide, a tragic number indeed; and

WHEREAS, while we can never adequately repay the debt we owe Ben Leftrick, it is important that we honor his memory to the fullest extent possible; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE

CONCURRING, that we commemorate the bountiful life of Specialist Benjamin David Leftrick, Tennessee Army National Guard, on the occasion of a bridge on State Route 840 being named in his honor, and extend our condolences to his family.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.