STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 49th Legislature (2004)

HOUSE CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION HCR1053: Roan of the House

and

Gumm of the Senate

AS INTRODUCED

A Concurrent Resolution designating the LCDR Clarence O. "Smokey" Tolbert Memorial Highway; directing the Oklahoma Department of Transportation to place permanent markers; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, Clarence Orfield Tolbert was born on June 4, 1939, in Tishomingo, Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, Clarence O. Tolbert through admirable self-discipline and dedication graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1962 and received his naval wings in 1964 and would obtain a ranking of Lieutenant Commander for the United States Navy; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Commander Clarence O. Tolbert embarked upon his honorable service to this great nation by dutifully reporting to VA 125 where he familiarized himself with the "A4 Skyhawk" and then accepted his assignment to VA 216, also known as the "Black Diamonds," where he continued to hone his flight skills by making two combat cruises to Vietnam aboard the USS Hancock and one Mediterranean cruise aboard the USS Saratoga. He would go on to compile an astonishing 174 combat missions and in excess of 500 carrier landings; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Commander Clarence O. Tolbert was appropriately recognized and honored with numerous medals and awards for his outstanding service. Among those honors were the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, 14 Air Medals, the Navy

Commendation Medal, the Navy Unit Citation, and the Vietnamese Service and Campaign Medals; and

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Commander Clarence O. Tolbert was recognized by his peers for his superior flying skills and would become a member of the Blue Angels Navy Flight Demonstration Team; and

WHEREAS, On November 6, 1972, Lieutenant Commander Clarence O. Tolbert would eventually lay down his life for this country after courageously taking an assignment named Attack Squadron 56 on board the aircraft carrier USS Midway. Commander Tolbert launched his A7B "Corsair" on a reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam. The aircraft sustained damage to the starboard wing as a result of heavy anti-aircraft fire. Commander Tolbert then maneuvered the aircraft to the favorable evasion route by heading toward the coast. After a fire and continual loss of fuel, the aircraft impacted in a flat spin; and

WHEREAS, a vigilant search and rescue effort was initiated, but was to no avail due to lack of visual or voice contact. A Vietnamese newspaper report noted the downing of the United States aircraft and the ejection of the pilot, but reported that the parachute did not open, nevertheless, Commander Tolbert was classified as "Missing In Action"; and

WHEREAS, almost 16 agonizing years to the day, the Vietnamese government notified the United States government of their "discovery" of the remains of Lieutenant Commander Clarence O. Tolbert, yet denied knowledge of Commander Tolbert's fate even though their soldiers had an eyewitness account of the ejection and exact location of impact.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE 2ND SESSION OF THE 49TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN:

THAT the portion of highway on State Highway 7 extending from the intersection of State Highway 7 and State Highway 99 to the

intersection of State Highway 7 and State Highway 1 be designated the LCDR Clarence O. “Smokey” Tolbert Memorial Highway.

THAT the Oklahoma Department of Transportation shall cause permanent suitable markers to be placed upon the highway bearing the name.

THAT copies of this resolution be distributed to the Secretary of Transportation Phil Tomlinson and the Director of Transportation Gary Ridley, to the members of the State Transportation Commission, and to E.J. and Bobby Tolbert.

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