

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 120

BY SENATOR PEACOCK

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To recognize and commend Preston Sharp of Redding, California, for his patriotism and to welcome him on his visit to the state of Louisiana.

WHEREAS, Preston Sharp is an exceptional young man who has created a patriotic groundswell that has swept the United States in the last three years; and

WHEREAS, called the "Pied Piper of Patriotism", Preston's good deeds have encouraged organizations and individuals to honor veterans, both living and deceased, for their courage and bravery; and

WHEREAS, veterans are the few select individuals who have chosen to serve their country, to wear the uniform, and to step into harm's way for the security of our nation; and

WHEREAS, the actions of Preston Sharp are a reminder to all of us of our civic responsibility to recognize their sacrifice; and

WHEREAS, on Veterans Day, November 11, 2015, Preston placed an American flag and flowers at the gravesite of his grandfather, a United States Navy veteran; Preston was dismayed to see that no other flags were present on the graves of other veterans; and

WHEREAS, thus began an odyssey that would take him to all corners of the United States to attend memorial ceremonies for veterans, and to accept an invitation extended by President Donald J. Trump to attend the State of the Union Address on January 30, 2018, at the nation's capitol as a special guest of the president; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, at eleven years of age, Preston began in earnest to place flags on every veteran's gravesite in the Redding Memorial Park Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, these were the humble beginnings of the "Flag and Flower Challenge", a mission that Preston created to urge individuals across the nation and in foreign countries where United States military service men and women are buried, to seek out the gravesites of veterans, to place a U.S. flag and a flower at each grave, and to speak the veteran's name, and to say out loud, "Thank you for your service"; and

WHEREAS, through the use of social media, his efforts to honor veterans began to

draw attention to his cause; as Preston Sharp continued his mission, it grew to include other cemeteries in his hometown, in Shasta County, and in each township along California Interstate 5 between Redding and Sacramento; a goal he finally achieved during the summer of 2017; and

WHEREAS, Preston's actions and vigorous patriotism became contagious and soon he received support from veterans' groups, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), that supported his challenge with donations and local participation in memorial ceremonies; and

WHEREAS, at first, Preston did odd jobs and sought small donations to raise funds for the purchase of small American flags and weatherproof red carnations; with the creation of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and a GoFundMe platform he has raised \$50,000 with the goal of reaching \$1 million; and

WHEREAS, Preston Sharp is determined to honor veterans in all fifty states and to challenge others to become involved in the Flag and Flower Challenge; he has visited cemeteries in California, Nevada, Oregon, Virginia, and Florida; in particular, national cemeteries that include the Baltimore and Annapolis national cemeteries in Maryland, Arlington, and Quantico, Virginia, and Eagle Point National Cemetery in Oregon; and

WHEREAS, in May 2018, the state of Louisiana will be added to his list of states with an invitation extended by the Vietnam Veterans of VFW Post #3798; Preston shall attend Memorial Day ceremonies on May 27, 2018, to be held at the Chalmette National Cemetery, the site of the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812; those veterans to be honored fought during the War of 1812, the Civil War, and the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, after Preston has placed flags and flowers on those graves in Chalmette, he shall deliver a speech the following day, May 28th, at the World War II Museum in New Orleans to raise awareness of the importance of paying tribute to our nation's military men and women; and

WHEREAS, since January 2018, Preston has organized the placement of more than 40,000 American flags and weather-resistant red carnations; and

WHEREAS, moving forward, his challenge to every American is to take the time to honor veterans with flags and flowers, visit a veterans' home, or with a personal, verbal

recognition of any veteran as an offering of thanks for his or her service to this great nation;  
and

WHEREAS, Preston Sharp did not seek acclaim, but recognition from his commitment came to the attention of the United States Veterans Administration senior leadership who shared a similar task of honoring veterans and which has invited Preston to attend a discussion of these issues at its headquarters in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, Preston's vision equates with that of the Veterans Administration mission of caring for those who have 'borne the battle'; Randy Reeves, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs remarked, "His solemn act of placing an American flag at their gravesites reminds us all of the weight of sacrifice and should serve as an inspiration to youth and adults alike"; and

WHEREAS, VA staff welcomed him and volunteered to place flags at Annapolis National Cemetery alongside Preston and his family; and

WHEREAS, he has been contacted by teachers and students seeking information so they may honor veterans in their community; and

WHEREAS, First Lady Melania Trump invited Preston to attend the "Be Best" announcement ceremonies at the White House; her Be Best initiative is a platform to address poignant issues that affect youth and to recognize young people across the country who have taken steps to create change; and

WHEREAS, Preston also honors living veterans as well by visitation, by conversing with them and listening to their stories, and sometimes by sharing a meal; and

WHEREAS, Preston's future plans are to honor veterans' gravesites at least once a month, to visit cemeteries in each state in the USA, to meet with groups of veterans, and to send flags and flowers to those interested in honoring veterans in their communities; and

WHEREAS, Preston Sharp is committed to honoring the service of veterans for the remainder of his life, until he can no longer bend down to place a flag or flower; his motto remains, "We need to honor veterans EVERY DAY and not just on a holiday"; and

WHEREAS, Flag Day is June 14th; its significance commemorates the adoption of the stars and stripes as our nation's flag; for a high achiever and patriot like Preston Sharp, every day is Flag Day.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby recognize Preston Sharp for his patriotism and does hereby commend him on his efforts to honor United States military veterans with the establishment of the Flag and Flower Challenge.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby welcome Preston Sharp on his visit to Louisiana to speak at the World War II Museum in New Orleans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby wish great success to Preston Sharp in all his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Preston Sharp.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES