

**SENATE CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION No. _____**

DIGEST OF INTRODUCED RESOLUTION

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION memorializing Colonel William
J. "Pete" Knight.

KENLEY

_____, read first time and referred to Committee on



Introduced

First Regular Session 117th General Assembly (2011)

**SENATE CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION No. _____**

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION memorializing Colonel William J. "Pete" Knight.

Whereas, Fighter pilot, test pilot, astronaut, legislator, and holder of the world's speed record in a fixed wing aircraft, Colonel William J. "Pete" Knight, passed away on May 7, 2004, at the age of 74;

Whereas, Pete Knight was born in Noblesville, Indiana on November 18, 1929. He grew up during the Depression on a farm, where he quickly learned the value of hard work and responsibility;

Whereas, Pete Knight's parents instilled in him the value of a good education. Consequently, he excelled academically, but he also became a star gymnast, a horse trainer, and displayed entrepreneurial spirit by developing his own florist delivery service at age 13;

Whereas, After attending Butler and Purdue Universities, Pete Knight enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1951. He received his degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio in 1952;

Whereas, In 1953, Pete Knight completed his pilot training, earning his commission through the Aviation Cadet



Program. One year later, he piloted an F-89D Scorpion to victory at the prestigious Allison Jet Trophy Race at the Dayton National Air Show, a race that was against the best pilots in the Air Force;

Whereas, In 1958, Pete Knight graduated from the Air Force Experimental Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base in California. He stayed on at Edwards Air Force Base, serving as a project test pilot on the F-100, F-101, F-104, T-38, and F-5 test flight programs;

Whereas, In 1960, Pete Knight had the distinction of being selected as one of six test pilots to fly the X-20 Dyna-Soar, an experimental flight project involving technologies which contributed to Space Shuttle development;

Whereas, June 29, 1967 was a memorable day for Pete Knight. He was climbing above 107,000 feet in the X-15, at more than four times the speed of sound, when his plane suffered a total electrical failure. Flying toward space without the help of his instruments, he displayed remarkable ingenuity under pressure when he managed to arch the plane over at 173,000 feet, safely reentering the earth's lower atmosphere, and gliding the aircraft to a safe emergency landing. Remarkably, his only injury that day came when he bumped his head climbing out of the cockpit. His impressive feat of airmanship earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross;

Whereas, Pete Knight's feats in flight continued on October 3, 1967 when he set the still unbroken world speed record in a fixed wing aircraft. He flew the modified X-15A-2 to a speed of 4,520 miles per hour (Mach 6.7), or nearly twice the speed of a bullet. During his flight, the heat created by the friction exceeded 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit, burning a hole in the tail of the X-15 and tearing off an engine. The exterior of the X-15 looked like "burnt firewood," according to one witness, yet Pete Knight still maneuvered the X-15 to a textbook landing;



Whereas, Pete Knight earned his astronaut's wings for piloting the X-15 into space, climbing 280,500 feet above the Earth on October 17, 1967;

Whereas, After completing the X-15 program flights, Pete Knight received orders to head to Southeast Asia for combat. He flew 253 missions over Vietnam during his combat tour, including 223 missions in an F-100 Super Sabre squadron;

Whereas, Upon finishing his combat tour, Pete Knight was assigned to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, where he served as the Test Director for the new F-15 Eagle. In 1973, he graduated from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces;

Whereas, Pete Knight returned to Edwards Air Force Base as Vice-Commander of the Air Force Flight Test Center in 1973. He served the remainder of his 32-year military career there until he retired as a full Colonel in 1982. During his final active duty assignment, he remained an active test pilot in the F-16 Combined Test Force;

Whereas, Pete Knight finished his military career with more than 7,000 flying hours, in over 100 different military and civilian aircraft. He won several honors for his service, including the Legion of Merit with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Air Medal with ten Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Harmon International Trophy. In addition, he was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame (1988), the Aerospace Walk of Honor (1990), and the International Space Hall of Fame (1998);

Whereas, Upon finishing his military career, Pete Knight turned to public service. He was elected to the Palmdale City Council in 1984, then became the first popularly elected Mayor in 1988, serving until 1992;

Whereas, In 1992, Pete Knight was elected to the



California State Assembly. In 1996, he was elected State Senator for the 17th Senate District in California, where he served until his passing in 2004;

Whereas, Upon his passing in 2004, Pete Knight was survived by his wife, Gail Knight, three sons, four stepchildren, and 15 grandchildren;

Whereas, Over 2,000 mourners attended Pete Knight's funeral, including friends, family, fellow lawmakers, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and fellow icons of test flight and astronaut notoriety, such as test pilot Charles E. "Chuck" Yeager and astronaut Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin;

Whereas, Major General Doug Pearson, commander of the Edwards Air Force Base Flight Test Center, said upon the passing of Pete Knight, "He was my personal hero. It's because of Pete Knight that I stand here today. He gave me the inspiration to reach out for the stars";

Whereas, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said of Pete Knight, "Senator Knight's memory will live on through his lifelong contributions to our nation's aerospace communities and our state's public affairs. We have lost a true Renaissance man";

Whereas, Pete Knight's legacy has endured since his passing. Pete Knight High School was opened in Palmdale, California. In 2007, the school celebrated its first graduating class. In 2009, the William J. "Pete" Knight Veterans Home of California was completed in Lancaster, serving as a residential care facility for California veterans; and

Whereas, Colonel William J. "Pete" Knight embodied the best of America. The native from Noblesville, Indiana was a true American hero. His record setting career as a test pilot in the Air Force and his years of public service have left an indelible mark on this country: Therefore,



*Be it resolved by the Senate of the General Assembly
of the State of Indiana, the House of Representatives concurring:*

1 SECTION 1. The Indiana General Assembly memorializes
2 Colonel William J. "Pete" Knight.

3 SECTION 2. The Secretary of the Senate is hereby directed to
4 transmit a copy of this Resolution to Gail Knight.

