

House Resolution 1717

By: Representative Jackson of the 142nd

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring the life of Willie Lee Duckworth and dedicating a road in his honor; and for other
2 purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Willie Lee Duckworth lived with his wife, Edna, in a blue house along
4 Highway 242 as it edges east toward Riddleville and Bartow; and

5 WHEREAS, every couple of months, a special letter would travel the time-worn path to his
6 door: a royalty check that made him feel like a king; and

7 WHEREAS, there were years when those checks brought more money than he made hauling
8 pulpwood in Washington County, and the money helped put food on the table and buttons
9 on his shirts; and

10 WHEREAS, in 1944, Willie Lee Duckworth, an unsuspecting buck private from Georgia,
11 authored one of the most popular marching cadences in U.S. Army history; and

12 WHEREAS, at first, it simply was known as the "Duckworth Chant" but it later gained fame
13 as "Sound Off":

14 Ain't no use in goin' home.
15 Jody's got your gal and gone.
16 Ain't no use in feelin' blue.
17 Jody's got your sister, too.
18 Sound off!
19 One, two.
20 Sound off!
21 Three, four....

22 With those words, and others, Duckworth made the journey from foot soldier to footnote in
23 military history; and

24 WHEREAS, "Sound Off" became the title of a song performed by big band leader Vaughn
25 Monroe, and this year marks the 58th anniversary of the movie by the same name, starring
26 Mickey Rooney; and

27 WHEREAS, although many folks in Washington County are aware of his contribution, the
28 march of time has delivered a generation of others who know little or nothing about his
29 serendipitous fame; and

30 WHEREAS, he was raised by his grandparents in a sharecropper's house not far from where
31 he lived, and when he was drafted during World War II it was the first time he had been more
32 than 100 miles from home; and

33 WHEREAS, on orders from a noncommissioned officer, he improvised his own drill for the
34 nine African American soldiers in his unit, and soon all the ranks were buzzing and keeping
35 rhythm; and

36 WHEREAS, "Sound Off" is still making noise with the blessings of the young soldier who
37 dreamed it up, and it is only fitting and proper that this marching maestro be honored by the
38 people of Georgia.

39 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
40 GEORGIA that this body hereby joins in offering its condolences to the family and friends
41 of Willie Lee Duckworth upon his passing and in honoring him by dedicating the portion of
42 SR 242 in Washington County from its intersection with SR 15 to the Jefferson County Line
43 as the Willie Lee Duckworth Highway.

44 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Transportation is authorized and
45 directed to erect and maintain appropriate signs dedicating the Willie Lee Duckworth
46 Highway.

47 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
48 and directed to transmit appropriate copies of this resolution to the family of Willie Lee
49 Duckworth and the Department of Transportation.