

House Resolution 527

By: Representative Leverett of the 33rd

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring the life and memory of George Albert Gaines Jr.; and for other purposes.

2 WHEREAS, on rare occasions, communities are graced with the presence and service of
3 great and industrious men and women; and

4 WHEREAS, when such singular individuals come along in the history of a community, it is
5 incumbent on those who are benefitted to recognize and honor the profound impact of these
6 rare and treasured souls; and

7 WHEREAS, for the community of Elberton, Georgia, George Albert Gaines Jr. is one such
8 rare and treasured individual; and

9 WHEREAS, George was born on August 17, 1919, in Elberton, Georgia, the second child
10 born to George Albert Gaines Sr. and Verlie Mathews Gaines (his older sister, Mildred
11 Gaines Broadwater, had arrived one year earlier, and his younger brother, James Smith
12 Gaines, would follow about two years after George); and

13 WHEREAS, when George was three and a half years old, his father contracted and died from
14 pneumonia, so to make ends meet, his mother opened a kindergarten in their house at the
15 corner of Edwards and Thomas Street in Elberton; and

16 WHEREAS, because she kept George with her all day while she worked, George started
17 kindergarten early and was effectively in kindergarten for three years; and

18 WHEREAS, George did not know it at the time, but Ms. Verlie's manner of providing day
19 care for her son would lead his good friend, Bob Heard, to claim years later that George was
20 so simple minded that he had to repeat kindergarten twice; and

21 WHEREAS, fortunately, George completed his high school and college studies and, after
22 graduation, answered the call of his nation in World War II, serving under General George
23 Patton in the North African campaign, Corsica, Sicily, and Italy; and

24 WHEREAS, George was initially in anti-aircraft artillery but later was a forward observer
25 with armored field artillery; and

26 WHEREAS, on April 20, 1945, while serving in the Italian campaign, George displayed
27 undaunted courage in the face of enemy fire and was awarded the Bronze Star; and

28 WHEREAS, the citation for the Bronze Star reads as follows: "For meritorious service in
29 combat on 20 April, 1945, near San Martino del Casale, Italy. During support artillery action
30 against the enemy, First Lieutenant Gaines proceeded with a battery of six self-propelled
31 artillery pieces to a forward location. Upon arrival, he found enemy troops strongly
32 entrenched near the prospective battery location. In spite of a murderous barrage of mortar
33 fire from enemy positions dug in behind several houses in the vicinity as well as intense and

34 demoralizing small arms fire from enemy snipers in the houses, he, coolly and with complete
35 disregard for his own personal safety, ordered his artillery pieces to roll to the relative
36 protection of the reverse slope of a nearby hill, where although still subject to dense enemy
37 mortar, artillery, and small arms fire, he was able not only to lay his artillery pieces into
38 firing position but also establish radio communication with the battalion fire direction center.
39 Taking advantage of terrain features, he succeeded in deploying the remainder of the battery
40 to positions of relative security so that no casualties were sustained. Once his battery was
41 in position, due almost entirely to his courageous efforts, First Lieutenant Gaines was able
42 to deliver accurate and timely fire upon enemy installations, and consequently provide
43 immediate and continued support for forward elements of the mountain troops. His forceful
44 leadership, initiative, and personal bravery under fire were an inspiration to all and
45 commendably uphold the highest traditions of the United States Army"; and

46 WHEREAS, while serving in the armed forces, George was also awarded the American
47 Defense Service Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, the World
48 War II Victory Medal, the Armed Forces Medal with Governors Bars, the American Theater
49 Campaign Medal, the National Guard Service Medal, and the State of Georgia National
50 Guard Distinguished Service Medal; and

51 WHEREAS, George married the love of his life, Matilda Joe "Tootsie" Johnson, on March
52 13, 1943; and

53 WHEREAS, George and Tootsie had two children: a daughter, Elsa Ann Gaines, born in
54 December 1943 while George was still overseas, and a son, George III, born in 1947; and

55 WHEREAS, after the war, George became the full-time executive officer with the Georgia
56 National Guard, assuming command of the 1st Battalion, 214th Artillery, with units in
57 Elberton, Washington, Thompson, Sparta, and Waynesboro; and

58 WHEREAS, while battalion commander, George received the Distinctive Service Medal for
59 exceptionally meritorious and distinctive service; and

60 WHEREAS, George also served with many civic and community organizations, including
61 the Sons of the American Revolution; the Salvation Army; the Rotary Club of Elberton,
62 which George joined in 1959 and of which he remained a member for 60 years; and the
63 Elbert County Board of Education; and

64 WHEREAS, George was a steadfast member of the First Baptist Church of Elberton and
65 served in many leadership positions in the church, including that of Sunday school director,
66 a role in which George served for 20 years; and

67 WHEREAS, George departed this life on January 1, 2021, at the age of 101 years; and

68 WHEREAS, George was rewarded for his devoted service to his community and county with
69 a long marriage to the love of his life, a loving family, a full and active life, and the
70 unqualified respect and admiration of his community; and

71 WHEREAS, such a distinguished career of selfless and devoted service merits a profound
72 expression of thanks and gratitude.

73 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
74 the members of this body join in honoring the life and memory of and express their profound

75 sense of appreciation and gratefulness to the family of George Albert Gaines Jr. for his
76 courage and bravery and his dedicated service to his community, state, and country.

77 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
78 and directed to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to the
79 family of George Albert Gaines Jr.