

Date of Hearing: April 16, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

ACR 188 (Quirk-Silva) – As Amended April 11, 2018

SUBJECT: Colonel Young Oak Kim, United States Army, Memorial Highway

SUMMARY: Designate a specified portion of Interstate 5 (I-5) in the County of Orange as the “Colonel Young Oak Kim, United States Army, Memorial Highway”. Specifically, **this resolution:**

- 1) Recounts the life and career of Colonel Young Oak Kim.
- 2) Designates the portion of southbound I-5 in the County of Orange, near its boundary with the County of Los Angeles (post mile 44.382), to the eastbound State Route 91 exit (post mile 42.671), as the “Colonel Young Oak Kim, United States Army, Memorial Highway”.
- 3) Requests the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to determine the cost of appropriate signs showing each of these special designations, consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system, and, upon receiving donations from non-state sources sufficient to cover the cost of the signs for which the donations were made, to erect those signs.

EXISTING LAW: Assigns Caltrans the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways including the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, but the resolution requests that Caltrans only erect the appropriate signage upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost.

COMMENTS: The author seeks to honor the life of Colonel Young Oak Kim who was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. He graduated from Belmont High School and attended Los Angeles City College. Kim was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1941 and he was selected for Infantry Officer Candidate School, from which he graduated in 1943, and was assigned to the 100th Infantry Battalion, a unit composed primarily of Japanese Americans from Hawaii. The battalion commander, fearing ethnic conflict, offered Kim a transfer but Kim wanted to stay stating, “there are no Japanese nor Korean here, we’re all Americans and we’re fighting for the same cause.”

Kim fought in North Africa and Italy against German forces for which he was awarded a Silver Star and his first Purple Heart. Now Lieutenant Kim, he participated in the liberation of Rome from the Germans after helping gain intelligence by crawling into German territory near Cisterna, Italy and capturing two German soldiers. For these actions, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Italian Bronze Medal of Military Valor in 1944, and the Italian War Cross for Military Valor in 1945. Kim also fought in France and was severely wounded by enemy fire and was sent home to Los Angeles. Kim, now a Captain, was honorably discharged from the Army and awarded a second Purple Heart and a French Croix de Guerre.

After leaving the Army, Kim started a successful self-serve laundry, but when war broke out in Korea, he reenlisted. Kim was sent to East Asia, having never been to Korea before, and in April

of 1951, he joined the 31st Infantry Regiment of the 7th Infantry Division as an intelligence and operations officer. In August of 1951, Kim was injured in a friendly fire incident during Operation Piledriver and was saved by doctors from John Hopkins University who were in Tokyo. After two months of recuperation, he returned to the front in Korea and was put in command of the regiment's 1st Battalion. He was promoted to Major, making Kim the first minority officer to command an army battalion on the battlefield in United States history. The battalion adopted an orphanage in Seoul and cared for more than 500 war orphans. Kim left Korea in September 1952, and in 2003 the South Korean government honored him for his service.

After serving in the war, Kim became an instructor at the U.S. Army Infantry School and various other assignments. In the early 1960's, Kim return to Korea as a U.S. military advisor to the South Korean Army during which time he was promoted to Colonel.

After leaving the Army, Kim attended California State University Dominguez Hills to study history. In 1973, he joined Special Service for Groups, a non-profit health and human services organization dedicated to building and sustaining community-based programs that address the needs of vulnerable and diverse multiethnic communities. Kim went on so serve on the board of the United Way, helping to expand the Asian service centers in the United Way network. Additionally, he helped found the Korean Youth Cultural Center; the Korean Health, Education, Information, and Research Center; the Go for Broke Monument; the Go for Broke National Education Center; the Japanese American National Museum; and in the 1990's Kim served as chairman of the Center for the Pacific Asian Family.

Colonel Kim passed away in 2005 in Los Angeles leaving a strong legacy of community service to the residents of southern California. According to the author, this resolution "will honor a great Korean American war hero, Colonel Young Oak Kim, and his service to California Asian Americans and to United States veterans."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

374 private citizens

Opposition

None on file

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