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HOUSE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives wish to recognize the memory of Flight Officer Shirl P. Best, who was killed in action during World War II; and

WHEREAS, Flight Officer Best was born to Oscar Best and Esther Brinker in Durand on April 13, 1921; he was one of six children; he graduated from Durand Community High School; and

WHEREAS, Flight Officer Best joined the United States Air Force in October 1942; he attended pre-flight training school in California and advanced navigation school in Texas; he graduated as a flight officer and navigator, receiving silver wings, on July 31, 1944; and

WHEREAS, Flight Officer Best, prior to his graduation, married Mary E. Van Etten in a military ceremony on July 1, 1944; and

WHEREAS, Flight Officer Best was assigned to the Hell's Angels and stationed at Molesworth Air Base in England, where he flew as a navigator in a B-17G during 14 missions, one of which included providing support at the Battle of the Bulge; and

1 WHEREAS, Flight Officer Best was on a mission to
2 Lutzkendorf, Germany when his plane was shot down by enemy
3 flak guns on February 9, 1945; before crashing, he and his crew
4 released their payload so it would not destroy the Village of
5 Eisenberg near their crash site, saving hundreds of lives; he
6 remained unidentified for nearly 40 years after the end of the
7 World War II; and

8 WHEREAS, Flight Officer Best was finally identified in
9 October 1991 when a group located the crash site of his plane
10 and recovered the human remains of the crew members; his
11 identity was confirmed by a wedding band that contained the
12 initials of himself and his wife, Mary; and

13 WHEREAS, On September 7, 1995, Flight Officer Best and his
14 fellow crew members were commemorated when the residents of
15 Eisenberg erected a memorial as a token of gratitude to the
16 crew for sacrificing their lives in order to save the village;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, Flight Officer Best's remains were brought back
19 to his hometown of Durand to be reburied with full military
20 honors on November 8, 2025; and

21 WHEREAS, Flight Officer Best is survived by his

1 sister-in-law, Marge Best; his nieces and nephews, Deanna Best
2 Ralston, Virginia Best Bender, Jerry Hatton, Royce Hatton,
3 Harlan Hatton, Carrie Prell Thorne, Lettie Prell, Joyce
4 Deckard Anderson, Linda Deckard Darden, Dennis Deckard, Luanne
5 Deckard Siliaman, and Jean Best Cash; and their spouses,
6 children, and grandchildren; and

7 WHEREAS, Flight Officer Best is one of many soldiers from
8 World War II whose legacy should always be remembered, and it
9 is fitting that appreciation be shown for the return of his
10 remains and that his bravery be honored to encourage the
11 continued efforts to locate the remaining missing 3,711
12 Illinois military personnel who fought in World War II;
13 therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
15 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
16 we recognize the memory of Flight Officer Shirl P. Best and his
17 acts of valor during World War II; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
19 presented to the family of Flight Officer Best as a symbol of
20 our esteem and respect.