

SENATE RESOLUTION 583

By: Senators Burton of the 5th, Harbison of the 15th, Broun of the 46th and others

A RESOLUTION

Commending Pete Wheeler and providing for the designation of the "Pete Wheeler Georgia War Veterans Memorial Plaza"; and for other purposes.

WHEREAS, Pete Wheeler was born on October 19, 1922, in Albany, Dougherty County, Georgia, graduated from Crawford High School, graduated from the University of Georgia with a B.S. degree, graduated from Atlanta Law School with LL.B. and LL.M. degrees, and graduated from Atlanta and Augusta Law School with a LL.D. degree; and

WHEREAS, Pete Wheeler completed four years of ROTC at the University of Georgia, served in the U.S. Army during World War II, from August 9, 1943, to March 7, 1946, as an instructor with the 79th Battalion Training Center-Camp Roberts, California, and then served in the Georgia Army National Guard from March 7, 1950, to June 30, 1978, retiring as a Brigadier General; and

WHEREAS, Pete Wheeler married Geraldine (Gerry) Odenweller in October, 1949, and after more than 48 years of marriage, they have three children and five grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Pete wheeler was Director of the Education Division of the Georgia State Department of Veterans Service (SDVS) 1949-51, was Assistant Director of SDVS 1951-54, and became Director / Commissioner of Georgia SDVS on June 26, 1954, and is still serving in that capacity more than 43 years later; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Pete Wheeler is America's "Dean" of State Directors/Commissioners of State Departments of Veterans Service/Affairs and has been recommended by the Georgia SDVS State Board for consecutive terms and has been sworn in by nine different Governors since 1954; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Pete Wheeler is a Past President of the National Association of State Directors/Commissioners of Veterans Service/Affairs, is a member of the U.S. Veterans Advisory Committee, is a Life Member of the American Legion, DAV, 40 & 8, AMVETS, is a member of Clairmont Presbyterian Church with his wife, has been recognized with one or more honors by every veterans organization within Georgia and in America, has served since 1954 as Georgia's Chairman, National Veterans Day Committee, and was appointed on November 1, 1994, as National Chairman of the Advisory Committee for America's long overdue World War II Memorial; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Pete Wheeler has worked personally with every President of America and Governor of Georgia since 1954 and has been instrumental in many innovative programs to benefit veterans and their families, including starting the first ever "State Supermarket of Veterans Benefits," in 1966, which has been held annually in Georgia for 31 years to date and is being duplicated in many other states; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Pete Wheeler has been involved in creating the "Georgia War Veterans Memorial Complex," in front of the Floyd Veterans Memorial Building (Twin Towers at the State Capitol Complex), which includes the Vietnam Statues (dedicated 11/11/88), the Persian Gulf War Memorial (dedicated 3/10/93), the Korean War Memorial (dedicated 11/11/93), the World War II Memorial (dedicated 12/7/95), the Vietnam Wall (dedicated 10/30/97), and the World War I Memorial (to be dedicated 4/6/98), and once completed will display the names of over 11,000 Georgians who have died serving America's military and defending freedom worldwide in the 20th Century and will be the only complex of its kind in America; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Pete Wheeler has worked with the Georgia General Assembly for over 43 years in bringing the best to Georgia's veterans and their families, while having his department serve as the premiere such entity in America and constantly taking care of veterans in an "above and beyond the call of duty" manner; and

WHEREAS, the State of Georgia is grateful to Commissioner Pete Wheeler and his lifelong service to veterans and their families, and future Georgians and visitors to the Georgia War Veterans Memorial Complex can acknowledge his sacrifice and devotion to duty.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA that the members of this body commend Pete Wheeler for the decades of outstanding public service he has rendered on behalf of the citizens of this state and nation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Georgia Building Authority is authorized and directed to designate the plaza in front of the Floyd Veterans Memorial Building as the Pete Wheeler Georgia War Veterans Memorial Plaza and to erect and maintain an appropriate marker at the plaza for such purpose.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to Pete Wheeler.