

PRISONER OF WAR RECOGNITION DAY

WHEREAS: American Prisoners of War (POWs) are national heroes. I call upon all Georgians to remember their lives, their deeds, their courage and their continued imprisonment on foreign soil. As we honor our soldiers who are currently POWs, we need to remember those who came before them and are now safely home. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the return of 591 American POWs, thanks to Operation Homecoming; and

WHEREAS: We cannot tell the tale of every POW, so to honor them all we salute Nathan Hale, one of our first American POWs in our first war against tyranny, the American Revolutionary War. His tale speaks for every POW and demonstrates that in the heart of all of these soldiers, our liberty came before their lives; and

WHEREAS: Nathan Hale was one of the first colonists to describe our goal in the Revolutionary War as independence, an ideal for which our soldiers are still fighting. This time, they are fighting for the independence of millions of Iraqi men, women and children who have known terror and abuse all of their lives; and

WHEREAS: On September 12, 1776, exactly 225 years before we awoke on September 12, 2001, to begin our first great mission of the 21st Century, Nathan Hale awoke to begin his last great mission. As he volunteered for this dangerous assignment, taking him far behind enemy lines, he expressed the sentiment of all our POWs by saying that he wished to be useful and that every kind of service necessary to the public good becomes honorable by being necessary. He concluded, if the leaders of my country need me to serve, I have no choice but to serve; and

WHEREAS: The true danger in which Nathan Hale placed himself became apparent when he was captured and made a POW. His fate was the same as many of our POWs who have been executed at the hands of our enemy, and he demonstrated their same courage when he said, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country;" and

WHEREAS: We *regret* the loss. We grieve for every POW; but we hope, pray and will fight for the return of every one of them, living and dead, to show them our unyielding gratitude for their service; now

THEREFORE: I, SONNY PERDUE, Governor of the State of Georgia, do hereby proclaim April 10, 2003, as PRISONER OF WAR RECOGNITION DAY and urge my fellow Georgians to join me in remembering them.

In witness thereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the Executive Department to be affixed this tenth day of April in the year of our Lord two thousand three.

Filename: PRISONER_OF_WAR_RECOGNITION_DAY_2003.d
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Directory: R:\GaNET
Division\Creative\Websites\perdue\proclamations
Template: C:\Documents and Settings\teresa\Application
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot
Title: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT DAY
Subject:
Author: karen
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 4/10/2003 9:01 AM
Change Number: 3
Last Saved On: 4/10/2003 9:16 AM
Last Saved By: DMoody
Total Editing Time: 23 Minutes
Last Printed On: 4/22/2003 11:46 AM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 2
Number of Words: 384 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 2,193 (approx.)