

Legislation Text

File #: 230680, **Version:** 0

Honoring war-hero Waverly Bernard Woodson, Jr., for his courageous and selfless service during World War II and further calling on Overbrook High School to induct him into their Hall of Fame.

WHEREAS, Waverly Woodson was born in Philadelphia in 1922. After attending Overbrook High School, Mr. Woodson attended Lincoln University where he began his education in pre-medical training; and

WHEREAS, After the United States entered World War II, Waverly put his studies on hold and joined the United States Army alongside his brother Eugene. Waverly joined the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Officer Candidate School where he was one of two African Americans. Before completing the course, he was notified that because of his race, he would not be eligible to be billeted in the United States Army Coast Artillery Corps. This led him to train as a combat medic, assigned to the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, and he underwent training at Camp Tyson in Paris, Tennessee. By 1944, he held the rank of corporal; and

WHEREAS, On June 6, 1944, Operation Overlord, or the Battle of Normandy, took place in France. Waverly's battalion participated in this infamous battle, being the only African American battalion to participate. Waverly was assigned to a landing craft tank (LCT) that was the land at Normandy in the early morning; and

WHEREAS, On the way to battle, his LCT was hit by a naval mine, causing it to lose power and drift with the tides. During the loss of power, Waverly was hit by an "eighty-eight" shell, causing shrapnel wounds to his lower body. After reaching the shore, his wounds were treated, and he and his battalion began setting up a field dressing station to aid those who were injured during the battle. Waverly worked tirelessly from 10 a.m. till 4 p.m. the following day. During those 30 hours, he treated soldiers in need of bullet removal, amputation, plasma, and limb setting. After his work at the field station was finished, Waverly was alerted of three British soldiers that were submerged during the sinking of their LCT. Waverly performed CPR on the three men, reviving them; and

WHEREAS, It has been estimated that Waverly Woodson saved over 200 lives that day. His commanding officer recommended he receive a Distinguished Service Cross for his actions. However, he ultimately received a Bronze Star Medal and a Purple Heart for his heroic actions that day. Shortly after, the Battle of Normandy, Waverly's battalion was restationed to the United States, where it served on bases in Hawaii and Georgia. After the war ended, Waverly was moved to the United States Army Reserve; and

WHEREAS, Waverly graduated from Lincoln University in 1950 with a degree in biology. That same year, he was reactivated by the United States Army to serve in the Korean War. He served in army morgues in the United Kingdom, France, and the Asia-Pacific. He also served stateside at Fort Meade, Valley Forge General Hospital, the Communicable Disease Center, and Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Waverly left the army in 1952, earning the rank of staff-sergeant; and

WHEREAS, Waverly Woodson married Joann Snowden. They had two daughters and a son; and

WHEREAS, After the army, Waverly began working in the Bacteriology Department of the National Naval

Medical Center. In 1959, he worked in the Clinical Pathology Department of the National Institutes of Health where he supervised the staffing and operation of operating theaters. He retired in 1980. In 1994, Waverly was one of three veterans invited by the French Government to visit Normandy to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the battle. He was given a commemorative medallion; and

WHEREAS, Waverly Woodson passed away at the age of 83 in Gaithersburg, Maryland. He was buried in Arlington Cemetery with military honors. In recent years, the heroic actions of Waverly Bernard Woodson, Jr. have gained the attention of the United States Congress where bipartisan legislation has been introduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate to award Waverly B. Woodson, Jr. the Congressional Medal of Honor for his conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby honors war-hero Waverly Bernard Woodson, Jr., for his courageous and selfless service during World War II and further calling on Overbrook High School to induct him into their Hall of Fame.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an engrossed copy of this Resolution be presented as a sign of the admiration and respect of this legislative body.