

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO AWARD DR. VICTOR WESTPHALL THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

WHEREAS, Victor Westphall earned a commission in the United States navy and served in the South Pacific theater during World War II; and

WHEREAS, following World War II, Victor and his wife, Jeanne, moved from Wisconsin to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where Victor established a homebuilding business and earned a master's degree and a doctor of philosophy degree from the university of New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, in 1964, Victor and Jeanne sold their real estate interest in Albuquerque and moved to Angel Fire, New Mexico, after purchasing the nearby Val Verde ranch, where it was Victor's plan to develop the eight-hundred-acre ranch into home sites and a nine-hole golf course; and

WHEREAS, it was during construction of that golf course that Victor was approached late in May 1968 by two marine officers who had the dreadful duty of informing Victor and Jeanne that their son, United States Marine Corps First Lieutenant David Westphall, had been killed in action in Vietnam on May 22, 1968; and

WHEREAS, after they learned of David's death, Victor and Jeanne decided that they should use his insurance money to

build a lasting and powerful memorial to their fallen son and his fifteen comrades who died as a result of that May 22 battle; and

WHEREAS, the Vietnam war was a conflict that divided this nation, and the weight of that division, felt by all citizens of this great nation, fell in an unfair and harmful way on the soldiers that fought the war; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Victor Westphall sought to mitigate this division by honoring the veterans of the war in which he lost his son, David Westphall; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Westphall chose to build in Angel Fire, New Mexico, a memorial to all Vietnam war veterans during a time when the division of the country was the deepest and returning veterans were vilified; and

WHEREAS, the Angel Fire Vietnam memorial began a process of healing among veterans that was continued by the building of the Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C., and continues to this day; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, the Angel Fire Vietnam memorial became New Mexico's thirty-third state park and is the only state park dedicated exclusively to the veterans of the Vietnam war; and

WHEREAS, all Vietnam war veterans regard the memorial in Angel Fire, New Mexico, to be the definitive remembrance of the harsh realities of a war that divided the country and of

the gentle man who welcomed them home in the turmoil of those days; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Westphall became a father figure to many Vietnam veterans who to this day revere him and honor his memory for what he did to assist returning Vietnam veterans and recognize their service and sacrifice in Vietnam;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the United States congress be urged to award the congressional gold medal to Dr. Victor Westphall; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the members of the New Mexico congressional delegation, the United States secretary of veterans affairs and the New Mexico secretary of veterans' services.