

HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 43

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2013

INTRODUCED BY

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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

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1 sites and a nine-hole golf course; and

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

8 WHEREAS, after they learned of David's death, Victor and
9 Jeanne decided that they should use his insurance money to
10 build a lasting and powerful memorial to their fallen son and
11 his fifteen comrades who died as a result of that May 22
12 battle; and

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

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

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

24 WHEREAS, the Angel Fire Vietnam memorial began a process
25 of healing among veterans that was continued by the building of

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1 the Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C., and continues to this
2 day; and

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

6 WHEREAS, all Vietnam war veterans regard the memorial in
7 Angel Fire, New Mexico, to be the definitive remembrance of the
8 harsh realities of a war that divided the country and of the
9 gentle man who welcomed them home in the turmoil of those days;
10 and

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

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

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