

## ONE HUNDRED THIRD LEGISLATURE

## FIRST SESSION

**LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 217**

Introduced by Nordquist, 7; Janssen, 15; Krist, 10; Mello, 5.

WHEREAS, Richard "Rich" F. Lang was born on February 10, 1926, and passed away on May 4, 2013. During his lifetime, Rich Lang lived life to its fullest as a son, husband, father, athlete, coach, firefighter, and United States Marine; and

WHEREAS, as a South Omaha boy, Rich Lang was a standout athlete at Omaha St. Joseph High School, having scored a city record of 61 points long before the three-point shot against rival Sacred Heart High School. He was a star pitcher on baseball teams, earning him the opportunity to play as a semi-pro baseball player across Nebraska and the region, and culminating in his signing with the Brooklyn Dodgers in the minor leagues and competing against the likes of Jackie Robinson; and

WHEREAS, as a teenager Rich Lang scuttled the legal age requirement in order to enlist with the United States Marines so that he could serve with others from his South Omaha neighborhood, his high school, and other members of the "Greatest Generation"; and

WHEREAS, as a young Marine serving in Guam, Rich Lang was shot and seriously injured and became a hero, yet he never accepted the accolades bestowed upon him by others; and

WHEREAS, after he was seriously injured, a mix-up in the War Department records resulted in a letter being sent to his parents in November of 1944 stating that their son, Pvt. Richard Lang, had been killed

in action, only to be rectified when 30 days later he called home to tell his father that he was alive and being cared for in a military hospital to which his father responded, "I knew they couldn't kill you."; and

WHEREAS, Rich Lang spent a year in a full body cast, hospitalized due to injuries to his hip, back, and right knee; and

WHEREAS, Rich Lang was awarded the Purple Heart for his valor and the injuries he sustained while fighting in Guam; and

WHEREAS, after returning home from the military hospitals, Rich Lang became a coach at Fremont Bergan Catholic High School, directing the basketball team there to the school's first state basketball championship; and

WHEREAS, upon his eventual return to South Omaha, he served as a member of the Omaha Fire Department and was credited with saving the lives of 40 people because he continued to place himself in harm's way as a first responder. While serving as an Omaha firefighter, he became a hero, yet he never accepted the accolades bestowed upon him by others; and

WHEREAS, because his own athletic career had been cut short due to his wartime injuries, Rich Lang channeled his sports knowledge and competitiveness to help train countless South Omaha boys by coaching them in sports with the same grit and determination in which he himself played, helping mold and shape the lives of those boys who today themselves are husbands, dads, and little league coaches; and

WHEREAS, as a loving husband, Rich Lang personally cared for his wife, Phyllis, who had become ill later in life, but whom Rich refused to

allow to live in a care facility, deciding that he would take on the required 24-hour-a-day care of his wife; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Guam for whom he fought as a Marine to free from captivity would return to the Midwest regularly and honor Rich Lang and other members of the military for their bravery while fighting in Guam; and

WHEREAS, Rich Lang participated as a World War II veteran in traveling to Washington, D.C., with the Heartland Honor Flights on the first trip on May 21, 2008.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, FIRST SESSION:

1. That the Legislature extends its sympathy and sends its condolences to the family of Rich Lang, and recognizes his lifelong service to his state and country.

2. That a copy of this resolution be sent to the family of Rich Lang.