

*To the 100th Annual National Convention
Of The American Legion
Minneapolis, Minnesota
August 28 - 30, 2018*

RESOLUTION NO: 109

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR REVIEW OF MINORITY AWARDS OF MEDAL OF HONOR
WWI

ORIGIN: CONVENTION COMMITTEE ON INTERNAL AFFAIRS

WHEREAS, At the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in what would become known as World War I, the United States initially pursued a policy of non-intervention; and

WHEREAS, German U-boats sank the RMS Lusitania on May 7, 1915, causing President Woodrow Wilson to demand an end to unrestricted submarine warfare, to which Germany complied; and

WHEREAS, In 1917, Germany resumed a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, and with the subsequent sinking of seven U.S. merchant ships by submarine the United States declared war on Germany; and

WHEREAS, The United States drafted 2.8 million men and by summer 1918 was sending 10,000 fresh soldiers to France every day; and

WHEREAS, General John J. Pershing allowed African-American combat regiments to be used in French divisions; and

WHEREAS, The 369th Infantry Regiment "Harlem Hellfighters" fought as part of the French 16th Division, and earned a unit Croix de Guerre for their actions at Chateau-Thierry, Belleau Wood, and Sechault; and

WHEREAS, While 121 men were awarded the Medal of Honor for actions during WWI, not one African-American soldier was awarded the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, Only two African-Americans, Freddie Stowers and Henry Johnson, were reviewed and awarded the Medal of Honor, but not until 73 years and 85 years after their combat actions in 1918; and

WHEREAS, Few other non-white soldiers, sailors, or Marines were awarded the Medal of Honor during WWI; and

WHEREAS, While the United States military conducted a review of Medal of Honor minority awards from WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War and all subsequent wars but no such systematic review was ever made of minority award of the Medal of Honor during WWI; and

WHEREAS, The United States will remain forever indebted to the bravery, valor, and dedication that the African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and other minorities displayed during a time of great national need; and

WHEREAS, The commitment and sacrifice of these veterans demonstrated a highly uncommon and commendable sense of personal bravery, devotion to comrades, duty, patriotism and honor in the finest traditions of the Medal of Honor; and

WHEREAS, The United States WWI Centennial Commission supports efforts to authorize a systematic review of valor medals awarded to minority servicemembers of WWI, who may have been denied the higher medals due to racial bias; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress has a proud tradition of recognizing all classes of veterans who served with uncommon valor; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on August 28, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion fully supports legislation to lift statutes of limitations and other obstacles that may impede proper investigation and appropriate actions for minority veterans of WWI whose military records and official descriptions of combat actions fully support consideration for award of the Medal of Honor.