

# Senate Concurrent Resolution 19

Sponsored by Senator BOQUIST

## SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**.

In memoriam: Brigadier General James Burdette Thayer, 1922-2018.

## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1  
2       Whereas Brigadier General James Burdette Thayer was born on March 10, 1922, in Portland,  
3 Oregon; and

4       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer was raised by his grandparents on their family farm in rural  
5 Oregon, and he graduated from Carlton High School in 1940; and

6       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer attended the University of Oregon on a journalism scholar-  
7 ship, but he answered his nation's call by enlisting in the United States Army in the aftermath of  
8 the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor; and

9       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer was selected for Officer Candidate School shortly after  
10 enlistment, and he was commissioned a second lieutenant and subsequently assigned to combat duty  
11 with the 71st Infantry Division, which was then operating in Normandy, France; and

12       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer, as a mine platoon commander, exemplified the core values  
13 of the United States Army while leading his platoon across France and training his soldiers in the  
14 methodology of clearing pathways and securing anti-personnel mines in areas near the Maginot  
15 Line; and

16       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer was then reassigned to command of a reconnaissance  
17 platoon, which he successfully led on many missions, one of which was a battle in a small Austrian  
18 town against a much larger enemy force, which resulted in the surrender of more than 800 German  
19 troops; and

20       Whereas on May 4, 1945, during a reconnaissance mission, Brigadier General Thayer and his  
21 platoon discovered and liberated the Gunskirchen Lager concentration camp, saving the lives of  
22 approximately 15,000 prisoners; and

23       Whereas for his heroic and selfless service in World War II, Brigadier General Thayer earned  
24 numerous medals and commendations, including the Silver Star and the Bronze Star; and

25       Whereas after the war, Brigadier General Thayer returned to the University of Oregon and  
26 graduated with a degree in economics in 1947; and

27       Whereas in 1954 Brigadier General Thayer married Patricia Cunningham and together they  
28 raised five children: James Jr., Anne, John, Tommy and Mike; and

29       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer had a long and illustrious career in business and as a civic  
30 leader, and his countless leadership roles included serving as president of the Oregon Historical  
31 Society, president of the Beaverton Chamber of Commerce, president of the Port of Portland and  
32 interim president of Tuality Community Hospital; and

**NOTE:** Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted.  
New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1       Whereas despite his very active and successful civilian life, Brigadier General Thayer remained  
2 in military service after World War II in the United States Army Reserve, retiring with the rank  
3 of colonel in 1982; and

4       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer continued his service to the nation as Oregon's civilian aide  
5 to the Secretary of the Army from 1989 to 1994, for which he was awarded the Secretary of Defense  
6 Medal for Outstanding Public Service; and

7       Whereas in 2000 Brigadier General Thayer was reactivated into military service as commander  
8 of the Oregon State Defense Force, and was promoted to brigadier general; and

9       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer modernized the Oregon State Defense Force, providing the  
10 State of Oregon with enhanced capacities for emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and re-  
11 covery operations; and

12       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer was a coach, mentor and teacher to generations of Oregon  
13 National Guard troops, who recognized his humility, intelligence, leadership and patriotism; and

14       Whereas in 1991 Brigadier General Thayer was inducted into the Infantry Hall of Fame at Fort  
15 Benning, Georgia; and

16       Whereas in 1996 Brigadier General Thayer was awarded the Grand Decoration of Honor for  
17 Services to the Republic of Austria for his role in liberating the Gunskirchen Lager concentration  
18 camp; and

19       Whereas in 2005 Brigadier General Thayer received the University of Oregon Alumni Associ-  
20 ation Distinguished Alumni Award; and

21       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer always denied being a hero and spoke of his wartime service  
22 with quiet dignity and rare humility; and

23       Whereas in 2017, reflecting on his wartime service, Brigadier General Thayer said, "Honor, duty  
24 and service to our country is something we just did, we never questioned it," and he expressed the  
25 hope that "in our pursuit of freedom, tolerance and democracy, our world will be a better place for  
26 generations to come"; and

27       Whereas Brigadier General Thayer died on September 16, 2018, as a good and faithful servant  
28 to the State of Oregon and our nation; now, therefore,

29 **Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:**

30       That we, the members of the Eightieth Legislative Assembly, celebrate the life and enduring  
31 legacy of Brigadier General James Burdette Thayer, and we recognize and honor his duty, devotion  
32 and service to his nation, state and community; and be it further

33       Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be presented to the family of Brigadier General  
34 Thayer as an expression of our sympathy and condolences.

35