

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 335 Session of
2025

INTRODUCED BY MALONEY, COOK, D'ORSIE, GILLEN, JAMES, MAJOR,
SCHEUREN, SMITH, KUZMA, O'NEAL, NEILSON AND KAUFFMAN,
OCTOBER 7, 2025

TO UNCONTESTED CALENDAR UNDER RULE 35 OCTOBER 7, 2025

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring the life and legacy of United States Army Air Forces
2 Warrant Officer William J. McMichael, expressing condolences
3 to his family and commending with gratitude and respect the
4 recovery and return of his remains.

5 WHEREAS, William McMichael was born June 30, 1905, in
6 Boyertown, Berks County; and

7 WHEREAS, William McMichael's sister, Audrey McMichael,
8 survives him; and

9 WHEREAS, A generation of McMichaels who never met William
10 McMichael include a grandson, Timothy McMichael, three great-
11 grandchildren and five great-great-grandchildren; and

12 WHEREAS, William McMichael held the rank of Warrant Officer
13 Junior Grade at the time of his death; and

14 WHEREAS, William McMichael enlisted in the United States Army
15 Air Forces in 1922 at 17 years of age; and

16 WHEREAS, William McMichael, having earned an honorable
17 discharge, reenlisted into active service with the United States
18 Army Air Forces in 1932; and

1 WHEREAS, In July 1941, William McMichael's unit was
2 transported to the Philippine Air Depot, Nichols Field military
3 base, Manila; and

4 WHEREAS, On December 8, 1941, Japanese air raids began at
5 Nichols Field and other Pacific military bases; and

6 WHEREAS, On December 22, 1941, the Japanese invasion of Luzon
7 Island near the shores of the Nichols Field base prompted United
8 States forces to retreat west to the Bataan Peninsula; and

9 WHEREAS, As armed conflict broke out, United States and
10 Filipino personnel were ordered to retreat toward the peninsula;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, On January 23, 1942, United States and Filipino
13 ground forces held off a Japanese amphibious landing assault on
14 the peninsula; and

15 WHEREAS, These ground forces blocked Japanese advances for
16 more than four months, running low on food, medicine and
17 ammunition and subject to Japanese gains in air superiority; and

18 WHEREAS, Disease and starvation were rampant throughout the
19 United States and Filipino ranks; and

20 WHEREAS, Without reinforcements, on April 9, 1942, the United
21 States Army Forces in the Far East surrendered; and

22 WHEREAS, The forcible transfer of prisoners of war, referred
23 to as the Bataan Death March, was an 11-day ordeal; and

24 WHEREAS, Between 72,000 and 78,000 United States and Filipino
25 prisoners of war marched 65 miles at gunpoint; and

26 WHEREAS, An estimated 5,000 to 18,000 Filipino prisoners of
27 war and an estimated 500 to 650 United States prisoners of war
28 died from exhaustion, starvation and disease or were shot by
29 their captors; and

30 WHEREAS, Survivors entered the Cabanatuan prison camp; and

1 WHEREAS, On May 5, 1942, the Japanese landed at Corregidor
2 Island, cementing their foothold on the Bataan Peninsula; and

3 WHEREAS, The next day, the remaining United States and
4 Filipino forces surrendered and were sent to Cabanatuan; and

5 WHEREAS, William McMichael, who endured the Bataan Death
6 March, was among the prisoners of war at Cabanatuan; and

7 WHEREAS, Cabanatuan infamously lacked food, water, sanitary
8 conditions and medical care; and

9 WHEREAS, The prisoners of war would be transferred throughout
10 the Asiatic-Pacific Theater, forced into manual labor in harsh
11 conditions to support the Japanese war effort; and

12 WHEREAS, By the summer of 1944, the Japanese began
13 transporting prisoners of war from the South Pacific island
14 chains to the Japanese home islands on hell ships, the cramped,
15 unsanitary transport vessels overloaded with bodies; and

16 WHEREAS, Under the Japanese plan, these prisoners of war
17 would be used for political leverage in surrender negotiations;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, On October 12, 1944, William McMichael was among
20 more than 900 prisoners of war prepared for transport on an
21 unmarked hell ship named the Oryoku Maru; and

22 WHEREAS, The next day, the Oryoku Maru departed Manila,
23 headed for the Japanese home islands; and

24 WHEREAS, Within hours of its departure, the Oryoku Maru was
25 registered as an enemy Japanese vessel by the aircraft carrier
26 USS Hornet; and

27 WHEREAS, The USS Hornet, unaware of the prisoners of war on
28 board, deployed aircraft to intercept; and

29 WHEREAS, This action killed more than 300 prisoners of war;
30 and

1 WHEREAS, Thereafter 1,300 prisoners and crew made it to shore
2 alive at Olongapo Point, Subic Bay, Philippines; and

3 WHEREAS, From December 13 through 19, 1944, William McMichael
4 and his fellow prisoners of war were held at an Olongapo Point
5 tennis court; and

6 WHEREAS, From December 20 through 24, 1944, William McMichael
7 and his fellow prisoners of war were sent by truck to a train
8 station in San Fernando, Pamapanga, Philippines, for transport
9 north; and

10 WHEREAS, From December 24 through 27, 1944, William McMichael
11 and his fellow prisoners of war were transported by train to San
12 Fernando, La Union, Philippines, where they were hauled onto a
13 new hell ship; and

14 WHEREAS, On December 27, 1944, William McMichael and his
15 fellow prisoners of war were transferred to a pair of new hell
16 ships, the Enoura Maru and the Brazil Maru; and

17 WHEREAS, Not marked as carrying prisoners of war, these ships
18 set for Takao Harbor, Formosa; and

19 WHEREAS, On January 1, 1945, while docked at Formosa, the
20 prisoners of war from the Brazil Maru were loaded onto the
21 Enoura Maru for final transport to the Japanese home islands;
22 and

23 WHEREAS, On January 9, 1945, William McMichael and 424 other
24 American prisoners of war died as the Enoura Maru traveled from
25 Formosa to Japan, attacked by United States carrier planes whose
26 crews did not know the ship was transporting prisoners of war;
27 and

28 WHEREAS, Approximately 900 surviving prisoners of war were
29 transferred to the Brazil Maru for the final journey to the
30 Japanese home islands; and

1 WHEREAS, Numerous discrepancies exist between eyewitness
2 reports by survivors and official Japanese reports relating to
3 prisoners of war; and

4 WHEREAS, The remains of William McMichael were contained in a
5 prisoner of war burial site at Formosa through May 1946; and

6 WHEREAS, Search and Recovery Team #9 then extracted 407 sets
7 of remains; and

8 WHEREAS, The team designated William McMichael's remains as
9 X-546A and sent them to the United States from Formosa; and

10 WHEREAS, William McMichael's remains were interred at the
11 National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific for more than seven
12 decades; and

13 WHEREAS, Disinterment occurred on October 30, 2017; and

14 WHEREAS, On July 26, 2018, DNA testing confirmed that remains
15 previously identified as belonging to one individual were
16 multiple sets of remains placed together; and

17 WHEREAS, The process of full DNA identification of individual
18 remains by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency began in 2023;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, On April 3, 2025, the remains of William McMichael
21 were finally identified at Offutt Lab, Nebraska; and

22 WHEREAS, On October 2, 2025, William McMichael's remains
23 arrived in Berks County with full military honors; and

24 WHEREAS, William McMichael's military records were lost in
25 the 1973 St. Louis records fire that destroyed millions of
26 military records dating back to 1912; and

27 WHEREAS, For distinguished and heroic achievements in the
28 Asiatic-Pacific Theater, William McMichael earned the Bronze
29 Star Medal; and

30 WHEREAS, For giving his life in service to our nation,

1 William McMichael earned the Purple Heart; and

2 WHEREAS, For being taken captive by the Japanese in May 1942
3 in the aftermath of the Philippines Campaign, William McMichael
4 earned the Prisoner of War Medal; and

5 WHEREAS, For serving under active-duty orders for a period of
6 more than 12 months between September 8, 1939, and December 7,
7 1941, William McMichael earned the American Defense Service
8 Medal; and

9 WHEREAS, For serving in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater between
10 December 7, 1941, and March 2, 1946, William McMichael earned
11 the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; and

12 WHEREAS, For serving in the United States Armed Forces during
13 the period between December 7, 1941, and September 2, 1945,
14 William McMichael earned the World War II Victory Medal; and

15 WHEREAS, For distinguished service in the defense of the
16 Philippines between December 8, 1941, and June 15, 1942, William
17 McMichael earned the Philippine Defense Ribbon; and

18 WHEREAS, For participation in the defensive garrison,
19 stationed for more than 30 days, William McMichael was
20 authorized to wear a Bronze Service Star on his Philippine
21 Defense Ribbon; and

22 WHEREAS, For extraordinary heroism against an armed enemy
23 during or after December 7, 1941, William McMichael earned the
24 Presidential Unit Citation; and

25 WHEREAS, For participation in the war against the Japanese
26 Empire in the Philippines between December 7, 1941, and May 10,
27 1942, William McMichael earned the Philippine Republic
28 Presidential Unit Citation; and

29 WHEREAS, For honorable discharge from military service
30 granted between September 8, 1939, and December 31, 1946,

1 William McMichael earned the Honorable Service Lapel Button -
2 World War II; and

3 WHEREAS, William McMichael is being laid to rest in a
4 military funeral service at Fort Indiantown Gap National
5 Cemetery on October 7, 2025; and

6 WHEREAS, The House of Representatives notes William
7 McMichael's courage, camaraderie and sacrifice; and

8 WHEREAS, The House of Representatives solemnly observes that
9 an estimated 72,000 World War II service members are missing in
10 action and 81,000 total service members are missing in action
11 across the World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War eras;
12 therefore be it

13 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives honor the life
14 and legacy of United States Army Air Forces Warrant Officer
15 William J. McMichael, express condolences to his family and
16 commend with gratitude and respect the recovery and return of
17 his remains.