
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 242 Session of
2026

INTRODUCED BY COLEMAN, STREET, TARTAGLIONE, ROTHMAN, VOGEL AND
KEEFER, MARCH 11, 2026

REFERRED TO RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS, MARCH 11, 2026

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring and commemorating the Pennsylvania First Defenders for
2 their historic service, valor and sacrifice in defense of the
3 national capital at the outset of the Civil War.

4 WHEREAS, On April 18, 1861, in response to President Abraham
5 Lincoln's call for 75,000 militia to defend the national capital
6 following the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, five volunteer
7 militia units from Pennsylvania, including, the Allen Infantry
8 of Allentown in Lehigh County, the Logan Guards of Lewistown in
9 Mifflin County, the Washington Artillerists and National Light
10 Infantry of Pottsville in Schuylkill County and the Ringgold
11 Light Artillery of Reading in Berks County, became known as the
12 "First Defenders" and were the first volunteer troops to reach
13 Washington, DC; and

14 WHEREAS, These 476 officers and men arrived on April 18,
15 1861, at approximately 6 p.m., were quartered in the United
16 States Capitol complex and received arms and ammunition from
17 President Lincoln in the Capitol basement, marking a moment of
18 profound national significance; and

1 WHEREAS, The First Defenders faced violent opposition while
2 transiting Baltimore, where Southern sympathizers attacked their
3 column and caused numerous injuries, including to Nicholas
4 Biddle of the Washington Artillerists, believed by many
5 historians to be the first uniformed casualty of the Civil War;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, In 1891, the General Assembly of Pennsylvania
8 authorized the creation and awarding of commemorative medals to
9 the surviving members of the Pennsylvania First Defenders,
10 formally recognizing their extraordinary courage, devotion to
11 duty and distinction as the first volunteers to answer the
12 nation's call; and

13 WHEREAS, The bravery, patriotism and sacrifice displayed by
14 the First Defenders represent ideals that continue to inspire
15 Pennsylvanians and Americans today; therefore be it

16 RESOLVED, That the Senate honor and commemorate the
17 Pennsylvania First Defenders for their historic service, valor
18 and sacrifice in defense of the national capital at the outset
19 of the Civil War; and be it further

20 RESOLVED, That the Commonwealth encourage residents, schools,
21 veterans' groups and civic organizations to recognize April 18
22 each year as "First Defenders Day" through appropriate
23 ceremonies, educational programs and community activities
24 honoring these pioneering volunteers and all Pennsylvanians who
25 served in the Civil War.