



HR0612

LRB097 14686 GRL 59639 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are pleased to congratulate Edwin J. Fizer and
4 the members of the Montford Point Marines on the occasion of
5 receiving the Congressional Gold Medal from the United States
6 Congress on October 25, 2011; and

7 WHEREAS, When the United States entered World War II in
8 December of 1941, Edwin Fizer, a native of New Orleans,
9 Louisiana, joined approximately 20,000 other recruits who
10 became the first African-Americans to enlist in the United
11 States Marine Corps; and

12 WHEREAS, Edwin Fizer left segregated Louisiana to begin
13 boot camp, only to be met with the full hostility of his drill
14 instructors at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina; despite constant
15 insults and insidious racism, he underwent training in field
16 artillery and anti-aircraft weapons at Montford Point, a strip
17 of land near Camp Lejeune that was used to train
18 African-American soldiers during the war; through his efforts,
19 he rose to the rank of Sergeant, which was the highest rank an
20 African-American could earn during that era; and

21 WHEREAS, After basic training, Edwin Fizer was retained at
22 Montford Point, along with 300 fellow Marines who comprised the

1 52nd Composite Defense Battalion; other soldiers at Montford
2 Point were assembled into Ammo Depot Companies, which were
3 eventually assigned to Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and other
4 areas of combat in the Pacific; in early 1944, the entire 52nd
5 Battalion shipped out, making their first landing at the
6 Marshall Islands; the battalion was later sent to the Mariana
7 Islands, about 400 miles from Japan; and

8 WHEREAS, In spite of their bravery under fire and
9 unwavering devotion to victory, Edwin Fizer and his fellow
10 Montford Point Marines were subjected to racism wherever they
11 went; military transportation remained segregated to the
12 extent that black Marines were even ordered to give up their
13 seats to German prisoners of war; food service was often
14 refused and threats and racial epithets were commonly used to
15 taunt them; and

16 WHEREAS, After the end of World War II in 1945, Edwin Fizer
17 was discharged, returning to New Orleans where Jim Crow
18 remained alive and well; although he served his country with
19 honor, he found little support from the military as he sought
20 to make his transition to civilian life; he later made his way
21 to Chicago where, with the help of the GI Bill, he enrolled and
22 completed his training at the Illinois College of Optometry; he
23 subsequently joined the Chicago Police Department, served as a
24 teacher, and launched a successful business career; and

1 WHEREAS, In 1965, Edwin Fizer assisted in the early
2 formation of the Montford Point Marine Association (MPMA); he
3 was also instrumental in spearheading the formation of the
4 Montford Point Marine Association Advisory Board, which was
5 established to provide fundraising assistance for MPMA's
6 Chicago Chapter, one of 37 Chapters nationwide; the Board has
7 made significant strides in raising greater public awareness
8 about the Montford Point Marines and the many selfless
9 sacrifices they made on behalf of their country; and

10 WHEREAS, On October 25, 2011, the United States Congress
11 voted to grant the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest
12 civilian honor given by Congress, to the Montford Point Marines
13 in recognition of their service in protecting our nation; and

14 WHEREAS, The members of the Montford Point Marines serve as
15 models of hard work, integrity, and dedication for the people
16 of the State of Illinois; therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
18 NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
19 we congratulate Edwin J. Fizer and the members of the Montford
20 Point Marines on the occasion of receiving the Congressional
21 Gold Medal and wish them success and happiness in the future;
22 and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
2 presented to Edwin Fizer as a symbol of our esteem and respect.