

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

At Charleston

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 4-22

By the Governor

WHEREAS, Hershel “Woody” Williams, a native and proud West Virginian, great friend and advocate for veterans and their families, and the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient from World War II, passed away at the age of 98 on the morning of June 29, 2022; and

WHEREAS, Woody Williams was born on a dairy farm in 1923 in Quiet Dell in Harrison County, where at a young age Woody began a lifetime of service to Gold Star families by delivering Western Union telegrams informing Gold Star families of the deaths of their loved ones; and

WHEREAS, Woody Williams enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and served in the Battle of Iwo Jima with the 21st Marines, 3d Marine Division, and during the battle, Woody displayed valiant devotion to duty and service above self and heroism above and beyond the call of duty as he enabled his company to reach its objective; and

WHEREAS, Woody Williams’s actions, commitment to his fellow service members, and heroism were recognized on October 5, 1945, when he received the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Truman at the White House; and

WHEREAS, following the war, Woody Williams worked for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for over three decades as a Veterans Service Representative, where he continued to serve veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, Woody Williams also served as the Commandant of the Veterans Nursing Home in Barboursville for nearly 10 years, helping veterans who were often in their last years of life; and

WHEREAS, Woody Williams's personal commitment to veterans and their families brought about the creation of the Woody Williams Foundation, where Woody continued his commitment to servicemembers and the Gold Star families who lost loved ones in their service to this Great Nation and her People; and

WHEREAS, to date, Woody Williams and his foundation are responsible for establishing 103 Gold Star Families Memorial Monuments across the United States with more than 72 additional monuments underway in 50 states and 1 U.S. Territory; and

WHEREAS, Woody Williams's commitment to service extended beyond his 20 years with the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Reserves, beyond his years of work for the VA, and beyond his important work with Gold Star Families, as Woody actively engaged with his local community and his State, serving on the Governor's Military Advisory Board for the State of West Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the West Virginia Legislature included Woody Williams in the West Virginia Hall of Fame and named him a Distinguished West Virginian in 1980 and in 2013, also being named to the Wall of Fame in the Civic Center in the city of Huntington, West Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Woody Williams's heroic actions and lifetime of service have often been recognized by our military and its highest officers, most recently the Secretary of the Navy named T-ESB 4 (Expeditionary Sea Base Ship 4) the USS Hershel "Woody" Williams mobile base sea vessel, which entered service in early 2018; and

WHEREAS, the Huntington VA Medical Center, near Woody's home in West Virginia, was renamed in his honor in 2018 and the Hershel "Woody" Williams VA Medical Center now works to improve the health of the men and women who have so proudly served our nation since 1932; and

WHEREAS, the Hershel "Woody" Williams Armed Forces Reserve Center, located in Fairmont, is the only National Guard facility in the country to be named after a Marine; and

WHEREAS, the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Hershel "Woody" Williams Post 7048 in Fairmont, West Virginia, and the main bridge in Barboursville, West Virginia, are also named for this native son; and

WHEREAS, after a lifetime of service dedicated to veterans and their families, Hershel “Woody” Williams will be laid to rest, but the important causes and works of his life will carry on through the Woody Williams Foundation and all those whose lives he touched, imparting his sense of duty and service to others; and

WHEREAS, the entire State of West Virginia mourns the loss of a man that means so much to this State and to our Nation; and

WHEREAS, a formal memorial service honoring the life of Hershel “Woody” Williams will take place on Sunday, July 3, 2022, at the State Capitol; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JIM JUSTICE, pursuant to the authority vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of this State, do hereby ORDER that Sunday, July 3, 2022, shall be a day of honor and mourning for the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient of World War II, Hershel “Woody” Williams.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of West Virginia to be affixed.



DONE at the Capitol in the City of Charleston, State of West Virginia, this Thirtieth Day of June, in the Year of our Lord, Two Thousand Twenty-Two in the One Hundred Sixtieth Year of the State.


GOVERNOR


SECRETARY OF STATE