

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO.4696, by Representatives Hunt, Alexander, Bailey, Williams, Takko, Kessler, VanDeWege, Eickmeyer, Blake, DeBolt, Newhouse, Kelley, and Smith

WHEREAS, Extensive flooding due to record rainfall in six southwestern Washington counties on December 3 and 4, 2007, caused the Governor to proclaim a statewide emergency and the President of the United States to declare the flooded areas a major disaster; and

WHEREAS, Fourteen aircraft from the United States Coast Guard, United States Air Force, United States Navy, Oregon Army National Guard, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and King County executed rescue operations in Lewis, Grays Harbor, Mason, and Thurston counties; and

WHEREAS, These deployments comprised the largest aerial search and rescue operation in a decade and resulted in at least one hundred fifty persons rescued; and

WHEREAS, Three aircrews from Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, positioned to provide search and rescue support for Navy aircraft in the region, were the first to launch on the mission and the first aircraft on location in Lewis County; and

WHEREAS, These brave crews rescued a total of thirty-eight persons over the course of that day and into the night, before retiring due to fatigue; and

WHEREAS, During the following days Naval Air Station Whidbey Island flew over twenty-five flight hours in support of this mission, rescuing ninety persons in Lewis and Thurston counties; and

WHEREAS, The example of these pilots and aircrew exhibit an incredible heroic response to a dangerous situation threatening the citizens of the state of Washington; and

WHEREAS, Admiral Jim Symonds, the Navy Base Commanders from the Puget Sound area, and five of the pilots and aircrew who rescued so many of our fellow citizens during the December floods in Lewis, Grays Harbor, and Southern Thurston counties are coming to Olympia;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives honor the spirit, the courage, and the mettle of Naval Air Station Whidbey Island's pilots and their aircrews; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be immediately transmitted by the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives to the Whidbey Island pilots and members of the aircrews, and to the Naval Air Station Whidbey Island.