

HCR 20 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Rules

Prepared By: Melissa Leoni, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/4

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Recognizes and honors Oregon State Police Trooper Dale Benjamin “Bennie” Courtney (1925-1950) for his service to this state.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon State Police Trooper Dale Benjamin “Bennie” Courtney was born on June 29, 1925, in McMinnville, Oregon, to Benjamin Harrison Courtney and Arlie Mae (Hickerson) Courtney. He was raised in Yamhill County and graduated from Lafayette High School before enlisting in the United States Army in September 1943 and serving his country during World War II. Trooper Courtney married Sylvia Alice Mahoney, and together they had a daughter, Mary Kathleen “Casey” Courtney-Lindberg, and a son, Dale B. Courtney. Trooper Courtney loved baseball and received an offer to play professionally for the Cincinnati Reds, but he loved his family even more, so he turned down the offer in order to stay close to home, near his widowed mother.

Trooper Courtney began his law enforcement career with the McMinnville Police Department before becoming a trooper with the Oregon State Police on June 19, 1950. Just months into his service with the Oregon State Police, Trooper Courtney was called to the home of Tigard farmer Fred Plieth, who had heard shooting from a neighbor’s farm during the early morning hours of October 1, 1950. Trooper Courtney and Mr. Plieth confronted two teenagers, Harvey Francis O’Day, 14, of California and John Louis Wilson, 15, of Newberg. When Trooper Courtney entered the farmhouse, he was shot by O’Day and killed instantly. The teenaged gunman also shot Plieth as he ran across a nearby field for help, but he thankfully survived his wounds. O’Day and Wilson stole Trooper Courtney’s service weapon and continued a spree of crimes that included firing at another person, stealing two cars and robbing a service station at gunpoint before they were finally apprehended in Tillamook.

Trooper Courtney was a dedicated law enforcement officer who served the people of the State of Oregon with honor and distinction. He was not scheduled to work the day he was killed but was filling in for one of his colleagues.

Trooper Courtney enjoyed spending time with his wife and infant daughter, his mother, and his brother’s family. At the time of Trooper Courtney’s death, his wife was pregnant with their son, Dale B. Courtney, but the trauma due to his death resulted in Sylvia Courtney going into premature labor, and their infant son passed away on January 25, 1951.

Trooper Courtney was widely respected, shared his passion for baseball as a volunteer coach, had many family members and friends, and is still greatly missed. House Concurrent Resolution 20 recognizes and honors Oregon State Police Trooper Dale Benjamin “Bennie” Courtney for his service to this state.