

HCR 27 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

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Meeting Dates: 5/11

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Recognizes and honors volunteer firefighter Robert A. Hales (1967-2008) for his service to this state.

Fiscal: No Fiscal Impact

Revenue: No Revenue Impact

House Vote: 57-0-3

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Robert A. Hales, a native Oregonian, was born September 4, 1967. He graduated from St. Helens High School and joined the United States Army in 1985, serving his country with honor and distinction.

While in the Army, Robert Hales began his training as a large equipment mechanic and completed his diesel certification at Portland Community College. He worked as a mechanic for Hertz Equipment Rental for 12 years.

Robert and Mary Hales married in 1991 and raised three daughters: Heather, Katie, and Sandra. Robert and Mary Hales moved to Scappoose, Oregon and in 1999 they bought a house across the creek from the fire station.

Robert Hales' interest in becoming a firefighter stemmed from the premature birth and illness of his daughter Katie. This prompted him to learn all he could about her care; he ultimately became certified as an emergency medical technician (EMT).

Robert Hales began his volunteer career with the Scappoose Rural Fire Protection District in 2000. He loved the family atmosphere of the fire station, and he would often stop at the station to visit with other fire personnel.

Robert Hales used his skills and training to help maintain fire equipment and vehicles. He was widely respected for his ability to diagnose and repair mechanical problems.

Robert Hales loved his community, and he was a dedicated volunteer. He provided agricultural work at a farm museum in Columbia County that his grandfather helped found. He helped maintain the county fairgrounds and served as a campground superintendent with his wife.

Being a volunteer firefighter was a natural extension of Robert Hales' commitment to and care for his community. In 2001, Robert Hales was honored with a local volunteer firefighter of the year award, and in 2002 he was nominated for a statewide award as the top volunteer firefighter in Oregon.

Robert Hales was an exemplary volunteer firefighter and EMT, and he could always be counted on to respond to fire or rescue calls. On August 17, 2008, Robert Hales responded to a call early in the morning and spent 12 hours fighting multiple wildfires caused by lightning strikes.

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Shortly after returning home, Robert Hales offered to drive his daughter to her job. Less than a mile from their house he suffered a cardiac event that caused him to lose consciousness and crash his vehicle. Robert Hales lost his life at the scene, surrounded by his Scappoose firefighting family. Because he died shortly after fighting wildfires, Robert Hales' death was officially considered to be in the line of duty, and he is honored on the Oregon Fallen Firefighters Memorial.

Robert Hales was survived by his wife of 17 years and their three daughters. His loss was deeply felt by his fellow firefighters and his friends. He was honored with a funeral procession that included firefighters and their vehicles from across Oregon. Since his death, Robert Hales' family remains heavily involved with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, volunteering to help other families in need.

House Concurrent Resolution 27 recognizes and honors volunteer firefighter Robert A. Hales (HCR 27) for his bravery and service to this state.