ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION No. 223

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 28, 2023

Sponsored by: Assemblywoman BETH SAWYER District 3 (Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblyman Bergen, Assemblywomen Swift, Matsikoudis, Assemblymen Guardian, Simonsen, Assemblywoman McCarthy Patrick, Assemblymen Sauickie, Umba, Rooney, Clifton, Thomson, McClellan, Auth, Space, Catalano, McGuckin, Rumpf, Assemblywoman Gove, Assemblymen Scharfenberger, Wirths, DePhillips, Webber, DiMaio, Barranco, Assemblywomen Eulner, Piperno, Dunn, Assemblyman Peterson, Assemblywoman N.Munoz, Assemblymen Torrissi, S.Kean, Assemblywoman DeFuccio, Assemblymen DeAngelo, Karabinchak, Mukherji, Assemblywoman Murphy Verrelli, Calabrese, and **Assemblyman Freiman**

SYNOPSIS

Designates March 16 as "Paws Healing Heroes Day" in New Jersey.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/21/2023)

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1 A JOINT RESOLUTION designating March 16 as "Paws Healing 2 Heroes Day" in New Jersey. 3 WHEREAS, New Jersey has a current veteran population of over 4 5 300,000 spanning World War II through to present day conflicts; 6 and 7 WHEREAS, The United States Department of Veterans Affairs 8 estimates that 29 percent of veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom 9 and Operation Enduring Freedom may experience post-traumatic 10 stress disorder (PTSD); and 11 WHEREAS, Scientific studies also estimate that upwards of 28 percent 12 of veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring 13 Freedom may experience traumatic brain injury (TBI); and 14 WHEREAS, A growing body of scientific research has shown that 15 service dogs can also reduce the severity and occurrence of 16 symptoms of PTSD, including anxiety, depression, and suicidal 17 ideation; and WHEREAS, Among other assistance animals, service dogs have 18 specifically been long used to support persons with physical, 19 20 developmental, and intellectual disabilities, including persons with 21 TBI; and 22 WHEREAS, Service dogs have also been trained to specifically support 23 veterans with military sexual trauma and seizure disorder; and 24 WHEREAS, In recognition of the role that service dogs have in 25 assisting America's veterans, the "PAWS for Veterans Therapy 26 Act" was enacted by Congress in 2021 in an effort to expand the 27 availability of service dogs; and WHEREAS, Nevertheless, the training of dogs, including rescue dogs, 28 29 to become service dogs, and more specifically service dogs that 30 meet the needs of veterans, falls primarily upon community non-31 profit organizations that depend on charitable donations; and 32 WHEREAS, Paws Healing Heroes, of Glassboro, is one such 33 organization in New Jersey dedicated to training service dogs for 34 pairing with veterans; and 35 WHEREAS, The average cost to rescue, train, and present a service dog to a veteran can be \$3,000 to \$5,000, which is often not covered by 36 37 insurance or other veterans' benefits; and 38 WHEREAS, New Jersey highlights the important role that assistance 39 animals play in the lives of persons with disabilities through 40 "Assistance Animal Recognition Day" on Wednesday of the second 41 week of August; and WHEREAS, The general public should also be made aware of the 42 unique and important role of service dogs in assisting veterans; 43 44 now, therefore, 45 46 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the 47 State of New Jersey:

AJR223 SAWYER

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1 1. March 16 of each year is designated "Paws Healing Heroes 2 Day" in the State of New Jersey in recognition of the special role of 3 service dogs in assisting America's veterans with such conditions as 4 traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, military 5 sexual trauma, and seizure disorder.

7 2. The Governor is requested to annually issue a proclamation
8 recognizing the day and calling upon public officials and the
9 citizens of this State to observe the day with appropriate activities
10 and programs.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

17 This joint resolution designates March 16 as "Paws Healing18 Heroes Day" in New Jersey.

19 Service dogs play an important role in assisting veterans with 20 traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 21 military sexual trauma, and seizure disorder. It is estimated that 29 22 percent of veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation 23 Enduring Freedom may experience PTSD, and 28 percent of 24 veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring 25 Freedom may experience TBI. New Jersey has a current veteran 26 population of over 300,000.

However, despite federal law to expand the availability of service dogs to veterans, the training and placement of service dogs falls primarily upon community non-profit organizations that depend on charitable donations, such as Paws Healing Heroes of Glassboro. The average cost to rescue, train, and present a service dog to a veteran can be \$3,000 to \$5,000, which is not covered by insurance or other veterans' benefits.

34 Designating "Paws Healing Heroes Day" will promote greater35 awareness of the unique role of service dogs in assisting veterans.