

Thank You Mr. Speaker: This morning I humbly rise and in doing so bring forward House Concurrent Resolution 27 which recognizes and honors the life of volunteer firefighter Robert A. Hales. May I begin by saying “thank you” to the chair of rules committee and the floor staff for facilitating this process. On August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008, firefighter Robert Hales responded to an early morning call to action he heard come over the radio and then proceeded to spend the next 12 hours fighting multiple wildfires caused from lightning strikes. Just shortly after, firefighter Hales suffered a severe cardiac event while driving - resulting in a vehicular crash and his untimely passing at the scene. His daughter who was with him in the vehicle at the time escaped unhurt. It was determined and deemed because of the event just hours from fighting the wildfires, that his death was officially in the line of duty. He was 41 and left behind a wife of 17 years at that time and three daughters.

Robert graduated from St. Helens High School and joined the Army in 1985 where he served his country with honor and distinction. In 1991 he was married to Mary and together they raised three daughters, Heather, Katie and Sandra. They moved to Scappoose to be near family and bought a house just across the street from the fire station. Roberts interest in becoming a firefighter stemmed from the premature birth and illness of one of his daughters. This prompted him to learn all he could about her care. Through this process, he ultimately became a certified emergency medical technician (EMT) with the Scappoose Rural Fire Protection District in 2000. As a volunteer Robert spent countless days and hundreds of hours at the station helping repair and maintain fire equipment and vehicles. He was highly respected by his firefighting family for his mechanical skills in this area. Beyond his time at the station, he showed his love for the community and was an active volunteer. He spent time at an agricultural work farm museum in Columbia County that his grandfather help found, and he spent additional time with his wife as a campground superintendent. For Robert, being a volunteer firefighter was a natural extension of who he was, and it spoke to his commitment to the people he cared about and his dedication to the community, even as dangerous as the work was at times.

Robert has been honored with a local volunteer firefighter of the year award, nominated for the statewide award as the top volunteer Firefighter in Oregon ranking #3 and he is memorialized on the Oregon Wall here in Salem as well as the national memorial in Washington D.C.

Here with us today in the side isle is wife Mary Hales, daughter Heather Hales and his aunt, Evelyn Hudson. Evelyn has been instrumental on the family’s behalf spearheading what has now been a five plus year effort. The process for this family to be here today began with a simple request to have a roadside memorial sign placed in honor of firefighter Hales. Little did they know at the time but there was nothing in place to allow for this to happen. She and the family worked with a prior legislative assembly to pass Senate Bill 528 in early 2019, which was

the beginning step in today's story. I spoke briefly about it in my opening courtesy this morning.

With the adoption of this concurrent resolution here on the floor today we all here will have made it possible to help this family in honoring their loved one and now allows them to be able to proceed with the highway memorial sign. Robert A. Hales is the first fallen firefighter that will go through this Oregon sign process. The family is thankful for this and is committed to help others that may follow navigate this process.

The Hales family is heavily involved with the National Firefighters Foundation volunteering their time to other families in need and even have gone one step further in their spirit of service.

Mary Hales asked that I share on behalf of her family they formed a non-profit organization in 2019 named: **Firefighter Hales Memorial Foundation** (FFHMF) for the purpose of providing financial assistance to families of fallen firefighters to attend or create memorials in honor of their loved one. It is a not-for-profit foundation relying on grants and public donations to provide aid and assistance.

To all here today, thank you for your support with your yes vote on HCR27, as we the members of this Eighty-second Legislative Assembly recognize, and honor volunteer firefighter Robert A. Hales for his service to this state.

#### CLOSING

Be it resolved by the legislative assembly of the State of Oregon that we the 82<sup>nd</sup> legislative assembly honor and celebrate the life and accomplishments of Robert A. Hales and we express our gratitude for his service to the people of the state of Oregon.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this shall be presented to the Hales family as an expression for our sympathy and condolences.

Thank you.

#### COURTESY

Thank You Mr. Speaker:

Today I rise to give courtesies to our former 80<sup>th</sup> Oregon Legislative Assembly for passing Senate Bill 528. This bill, from March of 2019, allows the Department of Transportation to erect and maintain a roadside memorial sign that commemorates a firefighter killed in the line of duty. Prior to the passage of this bill, there were only provisions to honor and have a memorial sign erected for fallen law enforcement officers. House Bill 3039 in 2011. The significance of this will become clear here soon as we proceed with today's work here on the house floor.