

## HCR 23 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

**Carrier:** Sen. Thatcher

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

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**Action Date:** 04/08/25

**Action:** Be adopted with amendments. (Printed A-Eng.)

**Vote:** 4-0-1-0

**Yeas:** 4 - Manning Jr, Meek, Smith DB, Thatcher

**Exc:** 1 - Woods

**Fiscal:** No fiscal impact

**Revenue:** No revenue impact

**Prepared By:** Kevin Rancik, LPRO Analyst

**Meeting Dates:** 4/8

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#### WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The resolution states that the Oregon Legislative Assembly recognizes and honors the sacrifice and service of Oregon civilians on Wake Island during World War II, and thanks Bonita Gilbert and Dick Tobiason for their research and preserving the memory of these civilians.

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Recognition of the Wake Island contractors
- States represented among the contractors
- Value of historical research

#### EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

The amendment removes whereas clauses referencing House Bill 2344 (2025).

#### BACKGROUND:

On December 8, 1941, the Empire of Japan attacked Wake Island, an atoll roughly 2,300 miles west of Honolulu, following their attack on Pearl Harbor. More than 1,100 American civilian contractors were building a United States Navy base on the island. [Research](#) from Bonita Gilbert states that 111 of these contractors were from Oregon. Many of the civilian contractors on Wake Island helped reinforce and defend the island during the siege and final battle against Japanese forces, during which 49 U.S. military personnel and 34 civilian contractors were killed, including two Oregonians.

Japanese forces eventually captured Wake Island and took all surviving Americans as prisoners of war (POWs), transporting more than 1,000 civilian and military POWs to Japan and China and forcing 98 POWs to remain on Wake Island to perform construction work. Eleven Oregonians were among the 98 civilian contractor POWs who were executed on Wake Island by the Japanese on October 7, 1943, nearly two years after their capture and forced labor.

The Japanese forces on Wake Island surrendered to U.S. forces on September 4, 1945, and in 1981, the United States Department of Defense recognized the civilians who contributed to the defense of Wake Island during World War II as eligible for military discharge, medals, and veterans' benefits.

House Concurrent Resolution 23 A states that the Oregon Legislative Assembly recognizes and honors the sacrifice and service of Oregon civilians on Wake Island during World War II.