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## *House of Representatives*

### MRVAN RECOGNIZES LEON'S HEROES

**Mr. Speaker:** It is with sincere admiration that I take this time to recognize one of Northwest Indiana's finest organizations, Leon's Heroes, as it will once again host the annual Leon's Triathlon, widely known as "America's Race." This outstanding display of patriotism and athleticism honors our veterans and active service members, with a special focus on those who have sustained injuries during their time in service. This year's event will be held at Wolf Lake in Hammond, Indiana, and will include static displays, festivities, and opening ceremonies leading up to the start of the race on Sunday, June 2, 2024.

Founded in 1983 by Leon Wolek, an avid triathlete and native of Hobart, Indiana, Leon's Triathlon has drawn participants from across the country and has been a source of immense pride for the Northwest Indiana community. Having grown up admiring his father who served in the military, and spending time with and listening to the stories of other veterans at American Legion Post 454 in New Chicago, Indiana, Leon was compelled to ensure that the many brave individuals who have defended our nation throughout its history received the recognition they deserve. With this idea in mind, Leon's Triathlon emerged.

Originally, the race took place in Leon's hometown of Hobart at the Izaak Walton League before its popularity and corresponding growth required its relocation. The city of Hammond, Indiana, was inspired by the organization's unwavering commitment to those who serve and have served our country and proudly welcomed the special event to the city. Fittingly, a portion of the race now runs along the Gold Star Memorial Highway, a designation which Leon's Heroes was instrumental in securing, and is dedicated to Indiana families who have lost loved ones in service. Leon's Triathlon has seen immense growth in participation since its inception, and many of the participants are veterans and active military members. As participation has grown so too has the number of events, which now includes additional events throughout the year. Since 2021, Leon's Heroes has also hosted an annual obstacle course event which takes place every September at Indiana Dunes National Park. This event recalls the attacks of September 11, 2001, while honoring our veterans and the many first responders who came to aid our fellow citizens on that tragic day.

Mr. Speaker, throughout its history, Leon's Heroes has remained steadfast in its commitment to honoring the legacy of our military members, past and present. I ask you and my other distinguished colleagues to join me in commending the organization for its outstanding dedication to the community, to our veterans, to our active service members, and to our first responders. Leon Wolek and the many devoted volunteers involved with this extraordinary organization are truly worthy of our highest praise.