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An act relating to designation of state buildings; designating a state veterans' nursing home in Land O' Lakes, Pasco County, as the "Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home"; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is in the process of constructing a second state veterans'

nursing home in Land O' Lakes, Pasco County, Florida, and

WHEREAS, a committee chaired by Representative Mike Fasano and committee members Senator Jack Latvala, Hillsborough County Commissioner Chris Hart, Pasco County Commissioner Ed Collins, Hernando County Commissioner Ray Lossing, Pasco County Veterans' Service Officer Fred Harrop, and Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs General Counsel Ron Frankel considered nominations from the public for naming the new state veterans' nursing home, and

WHEREAS, the name of First Lieutenant Baldomero Lopez, a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, was placed in nomination and unanimously selected by the committee as the recommended name of the new state veterans' nursing home, and

WHEREAS, First Lieutenant Baldomero Lopez, U.S. Marine Corps, grew up in Tampa, Florida, and graduated from Hillsborough High School, and

WHEREAS, after graduation, Baldomero Lopez entered the U.S. Navy and was selected for an appointment at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, where he graduated in the upper third of his class, and was commissioned in the U.S. Marine Corps, and

1 WHEREAS, First Lieutenant Baldomero Lopez was awarded
2 the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroic deeds on
3 September 15, 1950, the day on which he gave his life for his
4 country, and

5 WHEREAS, in action against enemy aggressor forces
6 during the Inchon Invasion in Korea on September 15, 1950,
7 First Lieutenant Lopez was leading his platoon against enemy
8 beach defenses, and

9 WHEREAS, exposing himself to hostile fire, he moved
10 forward alongside a bunker and prepared to throw a hand
11 grenade into the next pillbox, whose fire was pinning down his
12 sector of the beach, and

13 WHEREAS, taken under fire by an enemy automatic weapon
14 and hit in the right shoulder and chest as he lifted his arm
15 to throw the grenade, he fell backward and dropped the deadly
16 missile, and

17 WHEREAS, after a moment, he turned and dragged his body
18 forward in an effort to retrieve the grenade and throw it, and

19 WHEREAS, in critical condition from pain and loss of
20 blood, and unable to grasp the hand grenade firmly enough to
21 hurl it, he chose to sacrifice himself, rather than endanger
22 the lives of his men, and with a sweeping motion of his
23 wounded right arm, cradled the grenade under him and absorbed
24 the full impact of the explosion, and

25 WHEREAS, for his exceptional courage, fortitude, and
26 devotion to duty, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of
27 Honor, NOW, THEREFORE,

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29 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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1 Section 1. The State Veterans' Nursing Home in Land O'
2 Lakes, Pasco County, Florida, is hereby designated as the
3 "Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home" in honor of
4 First Lieutenant Baldomero Lopez.

5 Section 2. The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs
6 is directed to erect appropriate markers designating the State
7 Veterans' Nursing Home in Land O' Lakes as the "Baldomero
8 Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home."

9 Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
10 law.

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