



HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 24-1017

BY REPRESENTATIVE(S) Soper and Weissman, Amabile, Armagost, Bacon, Bird, Boesenecker, Bottoms, Bradley, Brown, Clifford, Daugherty, deGruy Kennedy, Duran, English, Evans, Frizell, Froelich, Garcia, Hamrick, Jodeh, Joseph, Kipp, Lieder, Lindsay, Lindstedt, Lukens, Lynch, Mabrey, Marshall, Martinez, Marvin, Mauro, McCormick, McLachlan, Ortiz, Parenti, Pugliese, Ricks, Rutinel, Sirota, Snyder, Story, Taggart, Titone, Valdez, Velasco, Weinberg, Willford, Wilson, Winter T., Young, McCluskie;
also SENATOR(S) Will and Roberts, Baisley, Bridges, Buckner, Coleman, Cutter, Danielson, Exum, Fields, Gardner, Ginal, Gonzales, Hansen, Hinrichsen, Jaquez Lewis, Kirkmeyer, Kolker, Liston, Lundeen, Marchman, Michaelson Jenet, Mullica, Pelton B., Pelton R., Priola, Rich, Rodriguez, Simpson, Smallwood, Sullivan, Van Winkle, Winter F., Zenzinger, Fenberg.

CONCERNING RENAMING BRIDGE I-04-K ON U.S. HIGHWAY 50 OVER THE GUNNISON RIVER AS THE "BRIGADIER GENERAL FELIX SPARKS MEMORIAL BRIDGE".

WHEREAS, Brigadier General Felix Sparks was a famous resident of Delta, Colorado who made significant contributions to the peace, safety, and general welfare of our great state and nation as a World War II war hero who helped liberate the Dachau concentration camp and was also a District Attorney for Colorado's 7th Judicial District, the longtime Director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, an Associate Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court, and a Brigadier General of the Colorado National Guard; and

WHEREAS, Sparks was born in San Antonio, Texas on August 2, 1917, and raised in the small copper mining town of Miami, Arizona; and

WHEREAS, Sparks enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1936 and served two years on active duty before joining the Army Reserve and attending the University of Arizona; and

WHEREAS, Sparks was called to active duty for World War II in 1939 and commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1940; and

WHEREAS, Through combat in Sicily, Italy, France, and Germany, Sparks served with the 45th Infantry Division's 157th Infantry Regiment and, near the end of the war, was commander of the 157th Infantry's 3rd Battalion, which he led during the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp; and

WHEREAS, Sparks was awarded the French Croix de Guerre and twice awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart for his wartime efforts; and

WHEREAS, After the war, Sparks came to Colorado where he attended law school at the University of Colorado, graduated with his Bachelor of Laws degree in 1947, and immediately began practicing law in Delta, Colorado at the law firm of Sparks, Willett, Conklin, and Carroll; and

WHEREAS, Sparks' law firm and the names associated with it would go on to make history, with Willett's son, Yeulin Willett, and Carroll's granddaughter, Morgan Carroll, serving in the Colorado state legislature and Charles Conklin serving as Speaker of the House from 1957 until 1960; and

WHEREAS, In 1948, Sparks was elected District Attorney for the 7th Judicial District, and he served as an Associate Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court in 1956; and

WHEREAS, In 1958, Sparks was appointed Director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, a position he maintained until his retirement in 1979; and

WHEREAS, Along with his leadership on the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Sparks was a commissioner on the Upper Colorado River Commission and represented the state in important water resource management negotiations including negotiations that led to the passage of the 1968 Colorado River Basin Project Act; and

WHEREAS, Sparks' work on the Colorado Water Conservation Board and Upper Colorado River Commission led to the funding and construction of several Colorado river projects including the Dolores Project, the Dallas Creek Project, and the Animas-La Plata Project; and

WHEREAS, Sparks was a lead drafter on the 1969 Water Rights Determination and Administration Act, and in 1972 he took a lead role in developing Colorado's initial instream flow protection program; and

WHEREAS, Sparks continued his military service until 1977, working his way up the ranks of the Colorado National Guard and eventually being promoted to Brigadier General and serving as Assistant Adjutant General for Army and Commander of the Colorado Army National Guard; and

WHEREAS, On September 25, 2007, at the age of 90, Sparks passed away of pneumonia in Denver; and

WHEREAS, In 2020, Netflix released a docudrama titled "The Liberator" that is based on Sparks' leading of his battalion to free the prisoners of the Dachau concentration camp in World War II; and

WHEREAS, While Sparks may be best remembered for his heroic military career, he was also one of our state's most accomplished leaders in water legislation, and his work continues to have ripple effects to this day; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the Seventy-fourth General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the Senate concurring herein:

That it is fitting and proper to rename the U.S. highway 50 bridge over the Gunnison river in Delta as the "Brigadier General Felix Sparks Memorial Bridge", and that funds from gifts, grants, and donations be used to pay for appropriate signage indicating the bridge's name.

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to the Colorado Department of Transportation, the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, the City of Delta, Delta County, the Colorado River District, the Delta County Historical Society, and members of the Sparks family.

Julie McCluskie
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

Steve Fenberg
PRESIDENT OF
THE SENATE

Robin Jones
CHIEF CLERK OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

Cindi L. Markwell
SECRETARY OF
THE SENATE