



HR1313

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives wish to congratulate Rep. John D. Cavaletto on
4 his retirement and recognize his distinguished career of public
5 service to the people of Illinois; and

6 WHEREAS, Rep. Cavaletto was born in Centenary, Indiana on
7 June 8, 1940 and grew up in a coal mining family in Sesser; he
8 graduated from Sesser High School and earned his bachelor's and
9 master's degrees in education at Southern Illinois University
10 at Carbondale; he received his administrative endorsement from
11 Eastern Illinois University; and

12 WHEREAS, At 14 years old, Rep. Cavaletto and his future
13 wife, Connie, obtained their social security cards together so
14 they could work at the summer camp for disabled children at
15 Giant City State Park in Carbondale; after many years of
16 developing programs for persons with special needs, his summer
17 programs became the model for the Kennedy Foundation and its
18 program that would ultimately become the Special Olympics
19 movement; and

20 WHEREAS, Rep. Cavaletto became a teacher and basketball
21 coach, taking the Breese Mater Dei High School boys basketball
22 team to the Illinois State Championships and leading that team

1 to 4th Place in the very competitive big schools division of
2 Illinois in 1974; still referred to as "Coach" by many
3 colleagues, friends, and former students, he later became the
4 principal of Salem Community High School, retiring in 2001; and

5 WHEREAS, Rep. Cavaletto is the grandson of immigrant coal
6 miners in the Sesser area and is a southern Illinois boy
7 through-and-through; he and Connie have three sons and three
8 grandchildren, and he is an avid quail hunter, fisherman, and
9 golfer; and

10 WHEREAS, Rep. Cavaletto has sponsored over 100 pieces of
11 legislation throughout his 10 years of service, focusing on
12 grandparents' rights, government reform, fiscal
13 accountability, and economic development for his district and
14 the entire State of Illinois; and

15 WHEREAS, During the 100th General Assembly, Rep. Cavaletto
16 served on the Appropriations-Elementary & Secondary Education
17 Committee, the Cost Benefit Analysis Committee, the Elementary
18 & Secondary Education: Licensing, Administration & Oversight
19 Committee (Republican Spokesperson), the Energy Committee, the
20 Environment Committee (Republican Spokesperson), the Fire &
21 Emergency Services Committee (Republican Spokesperson), the
22 Government Transparency Committee, and the Special Issues
23 Subcommittee (Co-Chairperson); he served as the Co-Chair of the

1 bi-partisan, bicameral Fire Caucus; and

2 WHEREAS, Rep. Cavaletto has been the recipient of the
3 Legislator of the Year Award from the Illinois Association of
4 Fire Protection Districts; he has also been awarded the
5 Illinois Farm Bureau's ACTIVATOR Award as a Friend of
6 Agriculture each legislative session of his service; he has
7 also been recognized by Kaskaskia Community College for his
8 support of higher education and received the Champion of Free
9 Enterprise Award from the Illinois Chamber of Commerce; he was
10 honored with the Distinguished Alumni Award from Goode-Barren
11 Township High School, now known as Sesser-Valier High; and

12 WHEREAS, Rep. Cavaletto has had a long-standing
13 relationship with the Special Olympics movement which began at
14 Southern Illinois University's Little Giant Camp where he and
15 Connie worked for \$10 a week with children and young adults
16 with Down syndrome and physical and mental challenges; at these
17 summer camps, under the guidance of Dr. William Freeberg who
18 was head of the Recreation Department, they planned and
19 conducted many activities for the campers, including running,
20 throwing balls, shooting bows and arrows, and even target
21 shooting; they would take the campers by bus over to Little
22 Grassy to go swimming; they came up with the idea of handing
23 out blue ribbons to the participants like the traditional
24 competitions for high school and college athletes; this was to

1 help build pride and self confidence in the children and young
2 adults; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1963, Rep. Cavaletto was one of the Southern
4 Illinois University graduate students asked by Dr. Freeberg to
5 travel to various places in Illinois to help train high school
6 students to be counselors at the camps; these four camps,
7 sponsored by the Kennedy Foundation, were located in Marion,
8 Waterloo, East St. Louis, and Decatur, and he and the others
9 were paid by the Kennedy Foundation to conduct this training;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, In 1965 and 1966, Rep. Cavaletto was the director
12 of the camps and lived year-round at Little Grassy Campground;
13 in those years, there would be eight weeks of camp for the kids
14 with Down syndrome and mental/physical challenges and then two
15 weeks of camp for kids with cerebral palsy; after graduate
16 school, he taught at Mater Dei High School in Clinton County,
17 where he ran a day camp for children with special needs for 13
18 years; and

19 WHEREAS, Rep. Cavaletto has many fond memories of his work
20 with campers and counselors over the years and special memories
21 of the time when people from the Kennedy Foundation and the
22 Chicago Park District came to southern Illinois to observe the
23 SIU programs for the campers; he is proud to have been a part

1 of the development of what became the Special Olympics; and

2 WHEREAS, On October 12, 2018, Southern Illinois
3 University's Touch of Nature Environmental Center honored Rep.
4 Cavaletto by re-naming one of its buildings for him; the
5 Cavaletto House renaming was in recognition for his support of
6 Touch of Nature, Camp Little Giant, and the Special Olympics;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, Rep. Cavaletto has been affectionately known as
9 "Coach" in the General Assembly in reference to his years as a
10 basketball coach and youth mentor; therefore, be it

11 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
12 HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
13 congratulate Rep. John D. Cavaletto on his retirement and
14 recognize his distinguished career of public service to the
15 people of Illinois; and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be presented to
17 the Honorable John D. Cavaletto and his wife, Connie, as a
18 symbol of our esteem and respect.