



HR1352

LRB096 22667 KXB 43835 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2           WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of  
3 Representatives are deeply saddened to learn of the death of  
4 Mary Lou Cowlshaw, who passed away on June 23, 2010 at the age  
5 of 78; and

6           WHEREAS, Mary Lou Cowlshaw was born on February 20, 1932,  
7 in Rockford, to Donald George and Mildred Corinne (Hayes)  
8 Miller; she graduated as valedictorian from West Rockford High  
9 School; she attended the University of Illinois and earned her  
10 degree in journalism; she also received two honorary degrees,  
11 including a Doctorate of Humane Letters from North Central  
12 College; and

13           WHEREAS, Mary Lou and Wayne Cowlshaw were married on July  
14 24, 1954; the couple was happily married for over 50 years;  
15 together, they had 3 children, Beth (David) McDaniel, John  
16 (Jane) Cowlshaw, and Paula (Andrew) Rader, and 8  
17 grandchildren, Jacob McDaniel, Zachary, Maxwell, Alexandria,  
18 and Rachel Green-Cowlshaw, and Emily, Elizabeth and John Paul  
19 (JP) Rader; she was preceded in death by her parents and her  
20 son, John; and

21           WHEREAS, Soon after their marriage, Mary Lou Cowlshaw and  
22 her husband moved to Naperville, where she began her career as

1 a journalist in 1958; she worked for the Naperville Sun for  
2 many years, earning a 1st-place award from the Illinois Press  
3 Association for a series on the unacceptable conditions in a  
4 nearby nursing home; in 1972, she was elected as a member of  
5 Naperville Unit District 203's school board, where she  
6 developed a passion for improving education; and

7 WHEREAS, Mary Lou Cowlshaw served as a school board member  
8 for more than a decade before being elected to represent the  
9 41st District in the Illinois House of Representatives in 1983;  
10 her district included nearly all of Naperville Township, part  
11 of Lisle Township, and most of the city of Naperville; and

12 WHEREAS, As a legislator, Mary Lou Cowlshaw's passion for  
13 advancing the State's educational system did not diminish; as a  
14 representative of the 41st District for 2 decades, she made  
15 issues related to education her top priority; she sponsored  
16 countless legislative initiatives, including Chicago school  
17 reform and a charter schools program that became a model for  
18 school reform throughout the State the nation at large; and

19 WHEREAS, Mary Lou Cowlshaw was the sponsor of the  
20 Education for Homeless Children Act, which minimizes  
21 educational disruption for homeless youth, promotes stability  
22 and continuity in education, and provides essential social  
23 support during periods of housing instability; she also was

1 instrumental in the creation of the Illinois Mathematics and  
2 Science Academy in Aurora, which admits about 250 gifted  
3 students a year and is frequently listed on Newsweek's annual  
4 list of "Best High Schools in America"; and

5 WHEREAS, Former Representative Cowlshaw was a champion of  
6 women's rights and was an active member of the National  
7 Federation of Republican Women and the League of Women Voters  
8 of Naperville; she was also a founding member and former  
9 president of the Naperville Republican Women's Club; and

10 WHEREAS, Mary Lou Cowlshaw served as the Republican  
11 spokeswoman on the House Elementary and Secondary Education  
12 Committee and was an active member of the Higher Education  
13 Appropriations Committee, the Mental Health and Patient Abuse  
14 Committee, the Public Utilities Committee, and the Select  
15 Committee on Aging; on the national level, she served as  
16 chairperson of the NCSL Education Committee and the Education  
17 Committee of the National Conference of State Legislatures, a  
18 commissioner from Illinois on the Education Commission of  
19 States, and a member of the National Education Goals Panel; and

20 WHEREAS, Mary Lou Cowlshaw's many contributions did not go  
21 unnoticed; in recognition of her efforts, she received  
22 countless awards from State and local governmental agencies and  
23 civic groups, including the State Board of Education, the

1 Illinois Community College Trustees Association, and the  
2 Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools;  
3 she won the Illinois Association of School Boards "Golden  
4 Apple" award numerous times; in 2001, she was the only lawmaker  
5 in Illinois to be recognized for Outstanding Contributions to  
6 Educational Improvement by the National Education Goals Panel;  
7 in 1994, she was named Legislator of the Year; her achievements  
8 and contributions as a legislator cannot be overstated; and

9 WHEREAS, Perhaps the most befitting recognition of Mary Lou  
10 Cowlshaw's commitment to educational excellence, access, and  
11 equity on behalf of students in Illinois and throughout the  
12 nation was when the Indian Prairie School District 204 honored  
13 her by choosing to name Naperville's new school building "Mary  
14 Lou Cowlshaw Elementary" in 1997; and

15 WHEREAS, As a legislator, Mary Lou Cowlshaw maintained  
16 that education is the number one determinant of an individual's  
17 quality of life; for this reason, education was her top  
18 priority, even following her retirement from the Illinois  
19 General Assembly; only 4 weeks after her departure from State  
20 government, she accepted a position as an adjunct professor of  
21 education at North Central College, where she was dedicated to  
22 furthering the education of Illinois' youth; and

23 WHEREAS, As a result of her tireless efforts, Mary Lou

1 Cowlshaw has left Illinois a better, more hopeful place than  
2 when she entered the world 78 years ago; therefore, be it

3       RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
4 NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we  
5 mourn, along with her family, friends, and the countless people  
6 whose lives have been blessed by her presence, the passing of a  
7 friend, a former colleague, and an inspiration to all, Mary Lou  
8 Cowlshaw; and be it further

9       RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
10 presented to the family of Mary Lou Cowlshaw as a symbol of  
11 our sympathy for their loss and as an expression of our  
12 profound gratitude and respect.