



HR0368

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1

HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, In 1946, an Iowa teenager, Verlyn R. "Swede"
3 Roskam, saw firsthand how the world looks when a man shares his
4 strength and his emptiness with something greater than himself;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, In that year, Swede Roskam, who had been attending
7 a private Midwestern residential school - Wentworth Military
8 Academy - learned that he would have to depart from the academy
9 due to unfortunate circumstances; and

10 WHEREAS, Caught in the madness of World War II, another
11 Wentworth graduate had never come home; the family of this
12 unknown American hero, with a name lost to history, stepped
13 forward to underwrite Swede's final year at Wentworth with the
14 faith that this promising young man would pay forward the
15 message he had heard; and

16 WHEREAS, Swede Roskam progressed from Wentworth to Knox
17 College, graduating in 1951, and from there to an even greater
18 achievement, the love and hand of his lifelong partner, Martha
19 Jacobsen Roskam; and

20 WHEREAS, In the upsurge of creativity that came after World
21 War II, Midwestern businessmen discovered how to use the

1 chemical bonds found in clay minerals to create a wide variety
2 of useful products; as an executive salesman for Oil-Ori
3 Corporation of America, Swede Roskam was able to share new
4 absorbent products with buyers around the world; and

5 WHEREAS, Throughout his business career, Swede Roskam was a
6 loving parent to his 5 children, Stephen, Dick, Sarah, Peter,
7 and Maribeth, and he was an upstanding and generous member of
8 his church; and

9 WHEREAS, As his business career ripened and matured, Swede
10 Roskam realized that the time had come when he could intensify
11 the ability to work through the world to fill the emptiness of
12 others; in 1982, aware that some private business firms were
13 disposing of excess inventory made redundant by harsh economic
14 conditions, he determined to create a matchmaking network in
15 which useful private sector inventory resources could be
16 donated, on a tax-advantaged basis, to post-secondary
17 institutions of higher education on condition that the schools
18 grant scholarships commensurate with the value of the
19 donations; and

20 WHEREAS, This win-win organizational insight, initially
21 implemented with the help of Illinois distribution firm W.W.
22 Grainger, generated Educational Assistance Ltd., the
23 nationwide helping organization that has played a role in the

1 granting of aid to more than 10,000 students across America;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Continuing their business work, Swede and Martha
4 Roskam opened new markets for American-invented products in Ho
5 Chi Minh City, the former Saigon; and

6 WHEREAS, In 2002, Martha saw a basketful of military dog
7 tags that were being sold as war memorabilia; Swede and Martha
8 impulsively bought the entire basket, making it the foundation
9 of the Roskam Dog Tags Project, Martha's and Swede's more than
10 5-year-long project to track down and return the tags to the
11 veterans or their surviving families; and

12 WHEREAS, Swede Roskam was more than qualified to help
13 Martha support his fellow American veterans, having served - as
14 a young college graduate - as a company commander in the Korean
15 War; and

16 WHEREAS, Although Swede Roskam was repeatedly honored by
17 the Republic of Korea, his fellow veterans, his company, and
18 his church, he repeatedly denied any claim to special pride or
19 honors, pointing to the support he had been given by special
20 people throughout the years and the need for him to pay it
21 back; and

1 WHEREAS, Swede Roskam further felt that although he had
2 been blessed with an abundant life, far more important as a
3 blessing were the lives of his 5 children and their spouses, of
4 Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Washington, and their 17
5 grandchildren; and

6 WHEREAS, Swede's son, Congressman Peter Roskam of
7 Illinois' 6th District, recalls his father's words that "Life
8 is choices - make good choices"; and

9 WHEREAS, Peter Roskam has testified that Swede Roskam
10 "lived an abundant life. His love for God was the foundation
11 upon which his life was built"; therefore, be it

12 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
13 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
14 mourn the death of Verlyn "Swede" Roskam of Wheaton, Illinois,
15 a Christian man, and an American; and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution should be
17 presented to Verlyn R. "Swede" Roskam's wife, Martha Jacobsen
18 Roskam; to his son and daughter-in-law, Stephen and Chandler
19 Roskam, of Oak Park; to his son and daughter-in-law, Dick and
20 Phyllis Roskam, of Indianapolis, Indiana; to his daughter,
21 Sarah Roskam, of Seattle, Washington; to his son and
22 daughter-in-law, Peter and Elizabeth Roskam, of Wheaton; and to

1 his daughter and son-in-law, Maribeth and Jon Coote of
2 Rogersville, Pennsylvania.