



SR2488

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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened to learn of the death of Abner J. Mikva, who passed away on July 4, 2016 at the age of 90; and

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WHEREAS, Abner Mikva was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; his parents were Ida and Henry Mikva; he married Zorita Wise on September 19, 1948; and

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WHEREAS, In 1944, after graduating from Washington High School, Abner Mikva enrolled in the United States Army Air Corps; after the war, he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where he met his future wife, Zorita "Zoe", on a blind date; he later attended law school at the University of Chicago, where he served as editor-in-chief of the law review and finished near the top of his class; after graduating in 1951, he served as a law clerk for United States Supreme Court Justice, Sherman Minton; and

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WHEREAS, Abner Mikva was long known in Chicago and Washington political and legal circles as a liberal reform leader and a man of unassailable integrity; in 1956, when he was living in Hyde Park and practicing law in the Chicago office of Goldberg and Devoe (later Goldberg, Devoe, Shadur, and Mikva), he was persuaded by his friends, Victor deGrazia

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1 and Lou Silverman, leaders in the grassroots Independent Voters  
2 of Illinois, to run for a seat in the Illinois House of  
3 Representatives in the newly drawn 23rd District; he won the  
4 primary and became the first independent Democrat from Chicago  
5 in modern times to have been elected to the General Assembly;  
6 as a Representative, he was a prominent supporter of handgun  
7 control, fair housing, and election and civil service reforms;  
8 and

9 WHEREAS, In 1966, Abner Mikva lost a close Democratic  
10 congressional primary election in the Second Congressional  
11 District on Chicago's South Side; in 1968, he was elected to  
12 serve in the United States House of Representatives, where he  
13 served on the Judiciary Committee among other assignments; he  
14 was known for his pro-civil rights and civil liberties views  
15 and as an opponent of the Vietnam War; in 1971, he served as a  
16 floor manager when the House passed the 26th Amendment which  
17 lowered the voting age to 18; after reapportionment in 1970, he  
18 moved to Evanston and ran in the open, newly created 10th  
19 Congressional District in Chicago's northern suburbs; after a  
20 loss in 1972, he won three consecutive elections, each by a  
21 margin of less than one percent of the vote; his hard-earned  
22 victories were widely attributed to the legions of enthusiastic  
23 doorbell-ringing volunteers he inspired, including many high  
24 school and college students; when he returned to Washington  
25 after the 1974 election, he exercised an influential voice in

1 the post-Watergate House of Representatives, serving as  
2 chairman of the liberal House Democratic Study Group and as a  
3 tax reform leader on the powerful Ways and Means Committee; and

4 WHEREAS, In 1979, Abner Mikva was confirmed to the United  
5 States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit by a vote of 58 to  
6 31 in the Senate; he served on the court until 1994, the last  
7 four years as Chief Judge; of his many judicial opinions, the  
8 one of which he was most proud was the one he wrote in a 1993  
9 case for a unanimous three-judge panel rejecting the Navy's  
10 dismissal of a homosexual Naval Academy midshipman, one of the  
11 early rulings by a federal court defending LGBT rights; the  
12 following year, he left the court to become White House  
13 Counsel; and

14 WHEREAS, Upon returning to Chicago in 1997, Abner Mikva and  
15 his wife started the Mikva Challenge, a non-partisan  
16 organization that promotes civic and political engagement  
17 among high-school students; through the program, thousands of  
18 Chicago students, with support from Mikva Challenge staff and  
19 their teachers, have volunteered in local and national election  
20 campaigns, served as election judges, and worked on  
21 neighborhood and citywide issues that the students identify as  
22 important to them; the Mikva Challenge model is now being  
23 implemented by teachers and school districts in other cities,  
24 most recently in Washington, D.C.; and

1           WHEREAS, Abner Mikva was awarded the Presidential Medal of  
2 Freedom by President Barack Obama in 2014; and

3           WHEREAS, Abner Mikva is survived by his wife, Zoe; his  
4 daughters, Mary, Laurie, and Rachel; his sons-in-law, Steven  
5 Cohen, James Pfander, and Mark Rosenberg; and his  
6 grandchildren, Rebecca and Jordan Cohen, Sarah, Samantha, and  
7 Benjamin Pfander and Jacob and Keren Mikva Rosenberg;  
8 therefore, be it

9           RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL  
10 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we, along with his  
11 family and friends, mourn the passing of Abner J. Mikva; and be  
12 it further

13           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
14 presented to the family of Abner Mikva as an expression of our  
15 sympathy.