

1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois General Assembly
3 wish to express our sincere condolences to the family and
4 friends of Roman C. Pucinski, who passed away on September
5 25, 2002; and

6 WHEREAS, Lovingly known as "Pooch" to colleagues and
7 friends, Mr. Pucinski served in the U.S. House from 1959 to
8 1973 and as a Chicago alderman from 1973 until 1991;
9 throughout his career, he was a key representative for
10 Chicago in Congress and for Chicago's Polish community; and

11 WHEREAS, Roman Pucinski grew up in a heavily Polish
12 neighborhood that is now Wicker Park; his youth was shaped
13 by his father's abandonment of his mother and siblings when
14 he was a child and by the Depression in his pre-teen years
15 when he wore government-issued shoes; he helped his mother
16 Lidia, later a personality on a radio station he owned,
17 support their family by selling Magic Washer soap to local
18 grocery stores and chocolate to office workers after school;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, Articulate and never at a loss for words, Mr.
21 Pucinski had an early interest in public affairs; in January
22 1939, while still a student at Northwestern University, he
23 became a reporter for the Chicago Times, a predecessor of the
24 Chicago Sun-Times; he later attended John Marshall Law School
25 but never took the bar exam because he was too busy covering
26 the 1948 presidential election; and

27 WHEREAS, Mr. Pucinski joined the United States Army Air
28 Forces during World War II, where he became a captain and
29 served as a bombardier in the first B-29 bomb raid on Tokyo
30 in 1944 and later flew 49 bombing missions over Japan; back
31 with the newspaper after the war, he became a City Hall
32 reporter, a job that exposed him to opportunities in

1 politics; and

2 WHEREAS, Mr. Pucinski was brought to Washington in 1952,
3 where he served one year as a bilingual chief investigator
4 for a special House subcommittee investigating the Katyn
5 Forest massacre of thousands of Polish military officers by
6 the Soviets during the war; and

7 WHEREAS, Urged by Mayor Richard J. Daley to run for
8 Congress, Mr. Pucinski entered the 11th District race on the
9 City's Far Northwest Side in 1956 and lost to the incumbent,
10 Timothy Sheehan; he ran again in 1958 and won; during his
11 tenure, he was known as the hardest working member of the
12 Illinois congressional delegation; Lyndon B. Johnson, who
13 served with Mr. Pucinski when Mr. Johnson was Senate majority
14 leader, described him as "the workhorse"; and

15 WHEREAS, Mr. Pucinski said his proudest achievement in
16 Congress was sponsoring legislation fostering public
17 education, a field in which he was considered an expert; the
18 legislation gave Chicago schools \$30 million in 1970 and
19 guaranteed them \$38 million the next year; and

20 WHEREAS, Mr. Pucinski also championed airline safety
21 while in Congress, something for which he was honored many
22 years later; on December 18, 1999, he was cited by the
23 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for his role as a
24 freshman congressman in 1959 when he pressured the government
25 to require cockpit voice recorders in all airplanes that
26 carry at least six passengers; the FAA awarded him the
27 agency's Silver Medal of Distinguished Service during a
28 ceremony in the Polish Museum of America; and

29 WHEREAS, After seven terms in Congress, Mr. Pucinski gave
30 up his seat to run unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate against
31 incumbent Sen. Charles Percy in November 1972; after the
32 election, he was appointed alderman of the 41st Ward, where

1 he championed the real people of Chicago, working men and
2 women, families struggling to get by and new immigrants
3 hungry for a fresh start; he served the residents of the
4 City's Far Northwest Side for 18 years as alderman until
5 1991; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Pucinski ran a strong race in the 1977
7 Democratic mayoral primary, but his main opponent, incumbent
8 Michael Bilandic, who became mayor after Richard J. Daley
9 died in December 1976, won the nomination in a six-way
10 Democratic primary and was elected mayor; during the race,
11 Mr. Pucinski vowed to decentralize the public school system
12 and give each school its own budget; he wanted to combat
13 school segregation by establishing reading centers on
14 racially neutral ground; and

15 WHEREAS, Mr. Pucinski had been the longtime president of
16 the Illinois Division of the Polish American Congress, and he
17 led a number of rallies in Chicago protesting communism in
18 Poland; he supported Poland's Solidarity labor movement, and
19 over the years he helped to raise \$1.5 million as the
20 movement gained international prominence; and

21 WHEREAS, Roman Pucinski's first wife, Aurelia, who
22 preceded him in death in April 1983, was the vice president
23 and general manager of the Pucinskis' family-owned radio
24 station WEDC-AM 1240; he later married Elizabeth Simpson, a
25 dean at the University of Wisconsin and an award-winning
26 poet; she preceded him in death in 1990; and

27 WHEREAS, Roman Pucinski was the proud father of son,
28 Christopher Pucinski and daughter, Aurelia Pucinski, director
29 of the State Department of Professional Regulation; devoted
30 brother to Wesley Pucinski and Halina Pawl; and grandfather
31 to Rebecca, Elizabeth Anne and James C. Keithley; he was also
32 a dear friend to many in the local, State, and national

1 political arena; therefore, be it

2 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
3 NINETY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
4 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we mourn, along with all who
5 knew him, the passing of Roman C. Pucinski of Chicago; and be
6 it further

7 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
8 presented to the family of Roman C. Pucinski with our
9 heartfelt condolences.