



SR0178

LRB104 12843 LAW 24194 r

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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 Vice Admiral Nils Ronald Thunman, U.S. Navy (Ret.), who passed away on January 27, 2025; and

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WHEREAS, Vice Admiral Thunman was the youngest of three children born to Carl and Julia Thunman, who were Swedish immigrants; he was raised in Springfield and graduated from Springfield High School in 1949; he attended the University of Illinois and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1954, earning a Bachelor of Science in Naval Science and a commission as an ensign; he married Elizabeth Caldwell in 1954, and they had two sons; he later married Owsley Brown Gillespie in 1995; and

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WHEREAS, Vice Admiral Thunman served in the U.S. Navy as a submarine officer until his retirement, and his commands included the U.S.S. Marysville (EPCE[R]-857), the U.S.S. Plunger (SSN-595), Submarine Squadron FIFTEEN (SUBRON 15), and Submarine Force of the U.S. Pacific Fleet; he was a senior member of the Nuclear Propulsion Examining Board and commanded the Polaris Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarine Squadron in Guam; he was then assigned as Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Officer Distribution in Washington, D.C.; he became Commander, Naval Submarine Force of the U.S Pacific

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1 Fleet in 1979; and

2 WHEREAS, Vice Admiral Thunman's last submarine assignment
3 was as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Submarine Warfare
4 in the Pentagon from 1981 to 1985, and he held this position
5 for longer than any other incumbent and was responsible for
6 many weapons systems still in use today and all submarine
7 programs, including the development of the Tomahawk Cruise
8 Missile, the Trident II Submarine Weapons System, and the
9 Improved Los Angeles Class Submarine and the design of the
10 Seawolf Class Submarine (SSN21); his office also planned the
11 operation that led to the discovery of the famous sunken
12 passenger liner the R.M.S. Titanic; he served as Chief of
13 Naval Education and Training from 1986 until his retirement in
14 1988; throughout his career, he was noted for his exceptional
15 ability to transform vision into action and for always being
16 on the cutting edge of technology; and

17 WHEREAS, Vice Admiral Thunman was a highly decorated
18 submarine commander who conducted many classified operations
19 of great value to the United States during the Cold War,
20 helping to bring an end to the existential threat of nuclear
21 war with the Soviet Union; he was awarded the Distinguished
22 Service Medal (two awards), the Legion of Merit (four awards),
23 the Navy Commendation Medal (two awards), the Navy Unit
24 Commendation (two awards, U.S.S. Snook and U.S.S. Plunger),

1 the Meritorious Unit Commendation, the Navy Expeditionary
2 Medal, the China Service Medal, the National Defense Service
3 Medal (two awards), the Vietnam Service Medal (three campaign
4 stars), the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Sea Service
5 Deployment Ribbon, and the Republic of Vietnam Meritorious
6 Unit Citation (Civil Actions Color); and

7 WHEREAS, After retirement, Vice Admiral Thunman became
8 president of the Valley Forge Military Academy and College and
9 chief executive officer and president of CAE Electronics,
10 Inc.; and

11 WHEREAS, Vice Admiral Thunman served as an inspiring
12 mentor to many; he was unsurpassed as a storyteller and kept
13 audiences spellbound while recounting his adventures in the
14 Navy; his service on submarine duty required exceptional
15 dedication and sacrifice in time with his family; and

16 WHEREAS, Vice Admiral Thunman is survived by his wife,
17 Owsley; his sons, Nils Ronald Jr. and Michael Erik; his
18 stepdaughter, Allison G. Romick; and five grandchildren;
19 therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL
21 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
22 Vice Admiral Nils Ronald Thunman, U.S. Navy (Ret.), and extend

1 our sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all who
2 knew and loved him; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
4 presented to the family of Vice Admiral Thunman as an
5 expression of our deepest sympathy.