



HR1305

LRB100 24218 MST 43496 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Few members of the Illinois General Assembly have
3 left as lasting and indelible a mark on state government,
4 fellow legislators, and the laws of Illinois as House Majority
5 Leader Barbara Flynn Currie; and

6 WHEREAS, Over the course of her 40 years in the Illinois
7 House of Representatives, Leader Currie has earned a reputation
8 as a respected, energetic, and trusted consensus builder with a
9 sharp mind and dazzling wit combined with grace and expertise,
10 as a relentlessly hard worker and beloved mentor, as an honest
11 broker who can always be counted on to level with interested
12 parties about their prospects for achieving their legislative
13 objectives, and as a skillful rhetorician whose mastery of
14 innumerable subjects and related arcana has repeatedly proved
15 her to be without peer in floor debate; and

16 WHEREAS, While Leader Currie is a staunch defender of
17 progressive causes and values, a fighter for the rights of
18 women, persons of color, and LGBTQ citizens, and a champion for
19 economic justice and equal opportunity for all, she has always
20 sought to find common ground and embraced opportunities to
21 build bipartisan agreement on the most contentious of issues;
22 and

1 WHEREAS, Born in La Crosse, Wisconsin on May 3, 1940, the
2 second of five children to Francis Thomas Flynn Jr. and Elsie
3 Rose Gobel Flynn, Leader Currie attended St. Thomas the Apostle
4 Grammar School and the University of Chicago High School after
5 her family moved to Hyde Park; and

6 WHEREAS, In 1959, Leader Currie married David P. Currie,
7 who was, for 45 years until his passing in October of 2007, a
8 constitutional scholar and professor at the University of
9 Chicago Law School; they raised two children, Stephen Francis
10 and Margaret Rose; and

11 WHEREAS, Leader Currie earned her bachelor's (cum laude)
12 and master's degrees in political science from the University
13 of Chicago in 1968 and 1973, respectively, while raising her
14 children and being active in local politics with groups such as
15 the Independent Voters of Illinois and the League of Women
16 Voters, and with community institutions such as the Hyde Park
17 Co-Op; and

18 WHEREAS, From 1965 to 1969, Leader Currie served as vice
19 president of the Chicago League of Women Voters; from 1973 to
20 1974, she taught government at DePaul University, and from 1974
21 to 1977, she was an assistant study director at the National
22 Opinion Research Center; and

1 WHEREAS, Following then-State Representative Robert Mann's
2 announcement in 1977 that he would not run for re-election,
3 Leader Currie was encouraged by family and independent-minded
4 local residents to run for state representative; she won her
5 first election as state representative in 1978, one of two
6 women, along with future United States Senator Carol Moseley
7 Braun, to win the multi-member 26th Representative District; it
8 would be the first and last time two women from the same
9 political party were elected to simultaneously represent the
10 same Representative District in Illinois; and

11 WHEREAS, Since 1979, the voters of the 24th, 25th, and 26th
12 Representative Districts have chosen Leader Currie to
13 represent them and their concerns in the Illinois House of
14 Representatives; today, her 25th Representative District,
15 which is nested within the 13th Legislative District once
16 represented by former President Barack Obama with whom she
17 served from 1997 to 2004, includes the neighborhoods of Hyde
18 Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Woodlawn, South Chicago, Calumet
19 Heights, South Deering, East Side and Hegewisch, and also
20 includes the University of Chicago, La Rabida Children's
21 Hospital, the Museum of Science and Industry, Frank Lloyd
22 Wright's Robie House, the Smart Museum of Art, numerous
23 theological seminaries, and the planned location of the Barack
24 Obama Presidential Center in Jackson Park; and

1 WHEREAS, During the five different decades in which she has
2 served, Leader Currie has been a member or vice-chairperson of
3 more than a dozen House committees and commissions, including
4 Reapportionment, Appropriations, the Commission to Rewrite and
5 Revise the Public Aid Code, and the Legislative Advisory
6 Committee on Public Aid; she chaired committees on State
7 Government Administration, Revenue, and Rules, the Joint
8 Committee on Government Reform, Citizens Council on Women,
9 Illinois Citizens Assembly, the Commission on the Status of
10 Women, the House Education Task Force, the Sexual Harassment
11 and Discrimination Task Force, and the Special Investigative
12 Committee to investigate the conduct and possible impeachment
13 of then-Illinois Supreme Court Chief Justice James Heiple; she
14 was one of the founding members of the Conference of Women
15 Legislators in 1979; and

16 WHEREAS, In 2009, Leader Currie chaired the Special House
17 Investigations Committee that recommended the impeachment of
18 former Governor Rod Blagojevich, the only Illinois chief
19 executive in the State's 200 years of existence to be removed
20 from office by the state legislature; and

21 WHEREAS, Leader Currie was first elected to House
22 Democratic leadership in 1993, serving as Assistant Majority
23 Leader from 1993 to 1995 and as Assistant Democratic Leader
24 from 1995 to 1997; and

1 WHEREAS, In January of 1997, Leader Currie made history
2 when she was named by Speaker Michael J. Madigan as the first
3 woman House Majority Leader in Illinois; from this position,
4 she has done her utmost to further the advancement of women in
5 state government; she was a co-founder of the Illinois Women's
6 Institute for Leadership, which prepares and trains Democratic
7 women to run for elected office, seek public appointments, and
8 govern effectively at all levels in Illinois; indeed, there may
9 be no more fitting tribute to her efforts across four decades
10 than the fact that when the 101st General Assembly takes its
11 oath of office on January 9, 2019, a majority of the members of
12 the Democratic caucus that she has led will be women; and

13 WHEREAS, According to the National Conference of State
14 Legislatures, Leader Currie is the longest-serving woman
15 majority leader in United States legislative history; and

16 WHEREAS, Leader Currie's career is marked by landmark
17 legislative achievements with a lasting beneficial legacy for
18 Illinoisans; a longtime advocate for open, transparent, and
19 accountable government, she sponsored Illinois' Freedom of
20 Information Act in 1983 and spearheaded later reforms to
21 strengthen the law and provide the public and press with fair
22 access to government records; and

1 WHEREAS, A passionate advocate for economic justice and
2 struggling families, Leader Currie was the lead negotiator of
3 the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program and the
4 State's first Earned Income Tax Credit law, which incentivized
5 work by allowing low-income families to keep more of their
6 income; and

7 WHEREAS, Leader Currie has passed legislation expanding
8 protections under the Equal Pay Act, prohibiting pay-to-play
9 for government contractors, allowing online voter
10 registration, creating an individual retirement savings
11 account for private sector workers, reforming the State's
12 juvenile justice system, prohibiting sexual harassment in the
13 workplace, requiring free mammograms for low-income women,
14 strengthening minority and female business access to State
15 contracts, improving child support enforcement, and
16 establishing the Nursing Home Reform Act; and

17 WHEREAS, From an early age, with public policy
18 conversations a frequent occurrence in her house while growing
19 up, Leader Currie was drawn to civic involvement; while living
20 in Washington, D.C., where David clerked for United States
21 Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, she first joined the
22 League of Women Voters; she would later serve as a member of
23 the Harriet M. Harris Center YWCA Advisory Board, the American
24 Civil Liberties Union of Illinois Board of Directors, the

1 Chicago League of Women Voters, the Midwest Women's Center, the
2 Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference, the South Shore
3 Commission, the Hyde Park Neighborhood Club, the American
4 Association of University Women, and the Sierra Club; and

5 WHEREAS, The arts have always been an important part of
6 Leader Currie's life and a refuge from the hurly-burly of
7 politics; she is a regular attendee of performances of the
8 Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Lyric Opera of Chicago and
9 at theaters throughout the city of Chicago, including the Court
10 Theater to which she is a benefactor; for more than 50 years,
11 the Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company of Chicago has held a
12 special place in her heart; in addition to being a past
13 performer in a variety of "G & S" productions, showcasing voice
14 and dramatic talents familiar to ticket holders at biennial
15 COWL springtime fundraising benefits in which her numbers were
16 guaranteed to bring down the house, she is a Sustaining Life
17 Member of the company, a generous patron of its productions,
18 and has many treasured memories of David Currie's work as a
19 director, producer, and performer who brought the joys of the
20 topsy-turvy worlds imagined by the Victorian-era Englishmen to
21 modern audiences; and

22 WHEREAS, Our farewell to Leader Currie is bittersweet; the
23 body is losing invaluable wisdom and institutional knowledge, a
24 wonderful mentor, fierce advocate, and a member of

1 uncompromising integrity and unquestioned honor, but we share
2 in her joy of being able to devote more of her time to
3 traveling the world and to her children, Stephen and Margaret,
4 her grandchildren, Irene, Nicholas, Katherine, and David, her
5 great-grandson, Zachary, her brothers, Michael and Terry, her
6 sister, Patricia, her adoring nieces and nephews, her
7 sister-in-law, Carolyn, and many, many dear friends;
8 therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
10 HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
11 offer our profound thanks to House Majority Leader Barbara
12 Flynn Currie for her 40 years of dedicated service to the
13 people of Illinois and congratulate her on her retirement from
14 the Illinois House of Representatives; and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
16 presented to Leader Currie as an expression of our gratitude,
17 appreciation, and best wishes.