



HR1237

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives have learned with much sadness of the passage
4 of a great friend and special contributor to the history of the
5 Illinois General Assembly, William J. "Bill" O'Connell of
6 Peoria; and

7 WHEREAS, It would not be an exaggeration or bring an
8 objection from any corner to say that Bill O'Connell is one of
9 a kind, an institutional legend, or an old-time reporter; and

10 WHEREAS, During his more than 60 years covering politics
11 and government for the Peoria Journal Star, Bill O'Connell was
12 always credited with faithfully keeping his
13 mythical-but-typical readers "Grace and Elmer" fully informed
14 with crisp, unvarnished reporting; he mentored hundreds of
15 journalists young and old from all regions of this State,
16 saving more than a few officials from blunders and never
17 missing an opportunity to help Peoria benefit from every bill
18 that passed through the legislative process; and

19 WHEREAS, Bill O'Connell received numerous awards and
20 honors during his career, including the 1986 Illinois
21 Journalist of the Year award and awards from the American
22 Political Science Association, the Associated Press, and the

1 Illinois Education Association; and

2 WHEREAS, While proud of his journalistic achievements,
3 Bill O'Connell did not shy away from the published accounts
4 that also credited him as the inspiration for funding the
5 downstate civic center construction program and with being one
6 of the surest translators of the often incomprehensible
7 dialects spoken by the inhabitants of Chicago, Cook County, and
8 downstate Illinois; and

9 WHEREAS, Perhaps the true uniqueness of Bill O'Connell's
10 persona was exemplified at the time of his 1996 retirement from
11 the Peoria Journal Star, when Lee A. Daniels, then Speaker of
12 the House of Representatives, and Michael J. Madigan, House
13 Democratic Leader, cosponsored Bill's retirement resolution
14 during the somewhat tumultuous 89th General Assembly; and

15 WHEREAS, The one-of-a-kind moments continued when Illinois
16 Senate President Philip J. Rock fought foggy weather to reach
17 Springfield and come to the floor of the Illinois Senate to
18 speak and describe Bill O'Connell as "as man whose integrity we
19 should all salute"; and

20 WHEREAS, During this time of sadness, we ask all who knew
21 and loved Bill O'Connell to remember the happier moments in his
22 life and to reach out in their own way to ask for strength and

1 comfort for his wife, Helen; their children, Kelly, Molly, Tom,
2 Tim, David, and William; their 12 grandchildren; and their 3
3 great-grandchildren; therefore, be it

4 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
5 NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
6 we mourn the passing of William J. "Bill" O'Connell, offer our
7 deepest sympathies to his families and friends, and affirm that
8 the State of Illinois and its people are better because of his
9 contributions, and fondly remember his great character, wit,
10 and wisdom; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
12 presented to the family of Bill O'Connell as an expression of
13 our sympathy.