



HR1367

LRB100 24424 MST 43738 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2           WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of  
3 Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of former  
4 Illinois State Representative and State Senator Tom Johnson,  
5 who passed away on December 3, 2018 at the age of 73; and

6           WHEREAS, Sen. Johnson was born in California on April 30,  
7 1945 and grew up in South Dakota and Illinois; he was raised in  
8 a Christian household, the son of an ordained minister, Wallace  
9 Johnson; he graduated from Oak Lawn Community High School in  
10 1963; and

11           WHEREAS, Sen. Johnson married his sweetheart, Virginia  
12 "Ginger" Van Der Molen; they began a life together that  
13 produced three sons, Soren, Derek, and Kirk, and grew to  
14 include three daughters-in-law and many grandchildren; and

15           WHEREAS, Sen. Johnson served in the U.S. Army from 1966 to  
16 1968, which included service in the Vietnam War from 1967 to  
17 1968; and

18           WHEREAS, After his military service, Sen. Johnson  
19 continued his education; he earned a bachelor's degree in  
20 political science from the University of Michigan in 1970 and a  
21 doctorate of law from DePaul University in 1974; and

1           WHEREAS, As a young Illinois lawyer, Sen. Johnson joined  
2 the office of the DuPage County State's Attorney's office and  
3 gained experience as a prosecutor; he co-founded the  
4 partnership of Johnson & Westra in 1979; these were boom years  
5 in DuPage County, and he developed professional standing and  
6 provided for his family; and

7           WHEREAS, Sen. Johnson entered politics and, in 1992, was  
8 elected to the Illinois House of Representatives; after taking  
9 office in January of 1993, he specialized in issues of criminal  
10 law; he served as chairman of the House Judiciary - Criminal  
11 Law Committee in the 89th General Assembly in 1995 and 1996;  
12 and

13           WHEREAS, During his tenure as chairman of this key  
14 committee, it moved numerous laws that remain on the statute  
15 books of Illinois, including the Sex Offender Registration Act;  
16 it pioneered laws to expand victim's rights and create the new  
17 offense of criminal streetgang racketeering; and

18           WHEREAS, One of the foremost achievements of Sen. Johnson's  
19 Judiciary Committee was the enactment of a Truth in Sentencing  
20 law to better match the public time of a sentence passed upon a  
21 defendant at trial with the actual length of time the defendant  
22 would actually serve in prison upon his or her final

1 adjudication as a convicted person; and

2 WHEREAS, Sen. Johnson continued his interest in criminal  
3 law after leaving the House of Representatives in 2003; he was  
4 appointed to serve on the Illinois Prisoner Review Board, where  
5 he was able to not only hear from individual prisoners and  
6 their guards, but also to investigate operational problems of  
7 the Illinois Department of Corrections; and

8 WHEREAS, Sen. Johnson combined being tough on crime with  
9 genuine compassion for those whose lives had gone wrong; he  
10 backed the award of good-conduct credits, a program of rewards  
11 for good conduct shown by some prisoners, that led to their  
12 early release from state prisons; and

13 WHEREAS, As a lawmaker and advocate, Sen. Johnson was a  
14 fighter for the Illinois pioneering system of juvenile justice,  
15 which has turned the lives of many troubled young Illinoisans  
16 around and given them the chance to set their feet on pathways  
17 that move away from lives of crime and despair; and

18 WHEREAS, Sen. Johnson served not only in the Illinois House  
19 of Representatives, but also in the Illinois Senate from 2011  
20 to 2013 as an appointed member following a vacancy; he was thus  
21 a member of both houses of the Illinois General Assembly and of  
22 the executive branch through his 14-year tenure on the Prisoner

1 Review Board; and

2 WHEREAS, Sen. Johnson was a member of Wheaton Bible Church;  
3 his faith guided many of the policy decisions and advocacy  
4 points for which he fought throughout his life; therefore, be  
5 it

6 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
7 HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we  
8 mourn the passing of former Illinois State Representative and  
9 State Senator Tom Johnson and extend our sincere condolences to  
10 his family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be it  
11 further

12 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
13 presented to Virginia "Ginger" Van Der Molen Johnson, the wife  
14 of the late Sen. Johnson, and his family.