



HR0415

LRB101 12577 MST 60995 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 Oren
4 "Lou" Lowder of Springfield, who passed away on May 8, 2019;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder was born on March 18, 1925 in Virden;
7 he always liked to say he came in with a bang, as the date of
8 his birth was also the date of the most devastating tornado in
9 the history of Illinois; and

10 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder was born in the heart of coal country
11 into a generational coal family; he was also born on the eve of
12 the Great Depression, when life was a struggle, work was hard,
13 and wages were meek, at best; at the age of 3, life got even
14 harder for his family when his father was killed in a coal mine
15 accident; left widowed with three children to raise, his mother
16 moved the family to Springfield, where she found work and
17 shelter managing boarding houses; and

18 WHEREAS, Although Lou Lowder never remembered living in the
19 Virden area, he was proud of his Virden roots; he would tell
20 stories of the many times he would take the train to visit his
21 family who remained there; and

1 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder's mother worked in boardinghouses in
2 downtown Springfield, where she cooked and cleaned in exchange
3 for a meager salary and room and board for her and her family;
4 his family believes that living among so many different people
5 coming in and out of the boardinghouses helped to instill in
6 him a sense of inclusion and hospitality that remained with him
7 throughout his life; and

8 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder attended St. Agnes Grade School and
9 Cathedral Boys High School, where he made deep friendships and
10 developed a lifelong love of sports; he loved to say that his
11 most memorable athletic achievement was being knocked
12 unconscious for over 24 hours by a 300-pound tackle from
13 Spaulding; his teammates always blamed him for losing the game,
14 even though they won it 43-0; he also boasted that he was back
15 on the field the very next week to help beat their archnemesis,
16 Springfield High, 13-6; and

17 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder graduated from high school in 1943; two
18 weeks after graduation, driven by his sense of honor and duty,
19 he boarded a train with his best friend, Joe Knox, and entered
20 World War II; there was not a time in his life that he was
21 prouder of nor more guarded about than the 32 months he spent
22 in the Navy during World War II; he spent most of his tour as a
23 Gunner's Mate First Class aboard the USS Walter C. Wann, a
24 destroyer escort; after assignments along the Eastern

1 Seaboard, the North Atlantic, and the Caribbean Sea, they
2 entered the South Pacific War Zone, where he earned six Battle
3 Stars; and

4 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder fought in the Battle of Leyte Gulf,
5 considered to be the greatest naval battle in history, where
6 the Walter C. Wann's sister ship was sunk by a 16 foot Japanese
7 battery; he later fought in the Battle of Okinawa, the
8 costliest naval battle in American history, and, although his
9 ship was heavily damaged by a Japanese kamikaze pilot, it did
10 not sink; and

11 WHEREAS, After the war ended, Lou Lowder stayed with the
12 Walter C. Wann as "Gun Boss" until it was mothballed in Long
13 Beach, California; and

14 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder re-enlisted in the Navy during the
15 Korean Conflict, serving nearly a year supplying the main air
16 transportation supply base in Tulle, Greenland, north of the
17 Arctic Circle; and

18 WHEREAS, Serving in war during his formative years had a
19 lasting impact on Lou Lowder; his commitment to duty and
20 country was unimpeachable; he was a man of honor, a loyal
21 patriot, and a fierce proponent and defender of our armed
22 forces; until the end, he was a military man and proud of it;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, After returning home from World War II, Lou
3 Lowder's commitment to community and his sense of duty drew him
4 to a career in the Illinois State Police; over the next 28
5 years, he served in a variety of roles, including as a road
6 trooper, a member of the Executive Security for Governor
7 Stevenson, a Shift Sergeant, a member of the first statewide
8 Staff Inspection Team, a member of the Academy staff, an Area
9 Commander, a First Executive Officer, and, finally, as first
10 Deputy Superintendent of the entire Illinois State Police, the
11 first to achieve the rank of Lt. Colonel; he also served as the
12 first Illinois State Police Legislative Liaison Officer; and

13 WHEREAS, As proud as Lou Lowder was of his military
14 service, he was equally proud of his beloved State Police; he
15 had immense pride in being a law enforcement officer and a
16 graduate of the FBI National Academy; he never stopped being a
17 trooper and spent his life committed to helping those who could
18 not help themselves; and

19 WHEREAS, After 28 years with the State Police, Lou Lowder
20 turned to his other passion, Motor Vehicle Laws; he served as
21 Executive Director of the Motor Vehicle Laws Commission; during
22 his 6 years as Executive Director, the Commission advised both
23 legislative chambers in matters of traffic safety and motor

1 vehicle licensing and regulation; and

2 WHEREAS, After the commission was abolished in 1983, Lou
3 Lowder served as Traffic Safety Consultant to Governor
4 Thompson, and, from 1984-1990, he was Highway Safety Advisor to
5 Jim Edgar; and

6 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder became one of the foremost national
7 authorities on motor vehicle law; he became the National
8 Chairman of the American Association of Motor Vehicle
9 Administrator's Committee to establish Uniform Standards and
10 Criteria; in that capacity, he traveled extensively around the
11 country conducting meetings and public hearings, which led to
12 the Uniform Commercial Driver's License Act; and

13 WHEREAS, In 1990, after a career rooted in duty, honor, and
14 a commitment to community, Lou Lowder retired; and

15 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder always believed we had a duty to each
16 other and an obligation to better our community; for many
17 years, he was an active member of the Knights of Columbus,
18 always answering the call when help was needed; in 1980, he was
19 named the Knight of the Year at Council 4175; and

20 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder was a man of deep faith; he was a
21 devoted Catholic and a proud member of the St. Frances Xavier

1 Cabrini Parish; when the church decided to include more lay
2 people in their service, he volunteered to be one of the first
3 Eucharistic Ministers and lay lectors; he coached the CYO
4 basketball team for 13 years; he served as chairman of the
5 Parish Council, chairman of the Men's Club, and chair of the
6 Education Committee; he served with his wife June as co-chair
7 of the Fall Festival and led two parish fund drives; he was
8 most proud of serving as a ground maintenance volunteer for 15
9 years; and

10 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder loved the sport of boxing, believing it
11 offered not only an outlet for pent up aggression but also
12 provided youth with an opportunity and a means to discipline
13 their lives; he was an active member of the Illinois Golden
14 Gloves for 40 years, serving as director of bouts, president,
15 and franchise holder; and

16 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder was a proud member of many
17 organizations, including the Eagles, the Illinois Police
18 Association, the VFW, and the Northend Democrats; when asked to
19 serve his community, he never said no; he believed that we are
20 only as strong as the community in which we live and that we
21 all must work together to improve that community; and

22 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder's military, professional, and
23 volunteer careers were indeed storied ones, but he will be

1 remembered most for the family that he and his beloved wife
2 June created; he met June Ruffing in the Spring of 1949 while
3 they were both working for the State of Illinois; it must have
4 been love at first sight, because they were married on October
5 22nd of that year; and

6 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder and June spent 70 years providing the
7 solid foundation upon which their family is deeply rooted; they
8 had seven children, losing their first born, John Oren, not
9 long after birth; they have since seen that family grow by 15
10 grandchildren (having lost a grandchild, Shawna, at the age of
11 5) and 19 great-grandchildren, with another on the way; and

12 WHEREAS, The sense of inclusion and hospitality instilled
13 in Lou Lowder early in life opened his family to hundreds of
14 others who have merged their lives with those of his family,
15 sharing in joy, celebrating triumphs, and, as now, helping each
16 other through tragedy; and

17 WHEREAS, Lou Lowder taught his family never to turn from
18 open arms or refuse a handshake, to show respect to those
19 around you, and, most importantly, to love your family above
20 all else; and

21 WHEREAS, Though Lou Lowder may be gone, he will live on in
22 the physical embodiment of his children, grandchildren and

1 great-grandchildren and in the memory of those who have shared
2 their lives with him and his family; therefore, be it

3 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
4 HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
5 we mourn the passing of Oren "Lou" Lowder and extend our
6 sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew
7 and loved him; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
9 presented to the family of Lou Lowder as an expression of our
10 deepest sympathy.