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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 William F. Bike, who passed away on September 24, 2019 at the age of 96; and

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WHEREAS, William Bike was born on February 7, 1923, the fifth of six children of Frank and Margaret Bike, and was raised in the Bucktown area of Chicago; and

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WHEREAS, William Bike worked in his family's bakery until the Great Depression forced it to close; he decided to leave Chicago and travel the road after completing his sophomore year at Lane Tech High School in 1939; he did this "so his family would have one less mouth to feed"; and

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WHEREAS, William Bike traveled across the United States by hitchhiking and hopping on freight trains, joining the 2 million people who "rode the rails"; he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps and worked odd jobs; he gained many skills, such as construction and auto repair; and

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WHEREAS, William Bike traveled the country and had many stories to tell about his adventures; once, he was arrested for vagrancy in Texas, and the town came to see the desperado that was spending the night in jail; he also snuck his way into

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1 California when their borders were closed to immigrants from
2 other states by hitchhiking with a Californian returning home;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, William Bike settled in Los Angeles and worked in
5 a restaurant and later a factory; on December 7, 1941, he was
6 on a streetcar when he heard that the United States had entered
7 World War II; he signed up to work as a civilian employee of
8 the U.S. Army and went to Alaska to construct air bases; and

9 WHEREAS, William Bike later joined the armed services as a
10 sailor in the United States Merchant Marine, the branch that
11 had the highest casualty rate during the war and did not gain
12 recognition as a service branch or part of the military until
13 1988; he served from 1942 to 1943 and was assigned to be a
14 baker on various ships bound for South America carrying
15 supplies and equipment; these seamen, providing the crucial
16 service of getting war materials to the troops, risked their
17 lives because enemy ships treated them like war ships even
18 though they had civilian crew; and

19 WHEREAS, William Bike completed two years in the Pacific
20 with the Merchant Marine and then joined the Army as a private;
21 he was decorated with a Good Conduct Medal and a World War II
22 Service Medal; he was a triple veteran of World War II, a
23 civilian employee of the U.S. Army, a Merchant Marine, and a

1 private in the Army; and

2 WHEREAS, William Bike returned to his home state of
3 Illinois and built a house in Lockport; he then returned to
4 Bucktown and became a driver for Checker Taxi Chicago; and

5 WHEREAS, William Bike met a Bucktown girl, Jean Smolen, and
6 they were married in 1954 at St. Hedwig's Roman Catholic
7 Church; they had a son, William S. Bike, in 1957; they lived in
8 Logan Square, where they attended St. Sylvester's Roman
9 Catholic Parish, and the North Center communities of Chicago
10 before they moved to River Grove; and

11 WHEREAS, In 1959, William Bike bought a truck and worked as
12 a driver for Peerless Enameling and Japanning Co.; he continued
13 to work as a truck driver until his retirement in 1987; he
14 worked for Nick Totoni & Sons Trucking and the Stockyards
15 Packing Co.; during these jobs, he became a member of the
16 International Brotherhood of Teamsters; and

17 WHEREAS, At the conclusion of its Tribute to Veterans
18 Motorcycle Ride in Oak Lawn on June 29, 2019, William Bike was
19 honored by the Teamsters Local 700 for his World War II service
20 and his service to the Teamsters; and

21 WHEREAS, William Bike was known to always have a side

1 business going, selling Christmas paper, clock radios, lamps,
2 and even baked goods; he invested in rental properties for a
3 period and bought food for poorer tenants, when they were in
4 need; he also worked part time at the Gazette Chicago newspaper
5 in circulation and was a member of the American Legion; and

6 WHEREAS, William Bike and his wife eventually moved to the
7 Autumn Green at Wright Campus retirement community on Chicago's
8 Northwest Side; after his retirement until Jean passed away in
9 2014, they spent nearly all their time together, only parting
10 when William went to the health club or his job at the
11 newspaper; they also spent a lot of time with Jean's sister,
12 Mary Smolen; and

13 WHEREAS, William Bike had great health; he became a
14 vegetarian from ages 50 to 70; he was dedicated to working out
15 and would often be mistaken for his son's brother; he
16 eventually relocated to the Illinois Veterans Home in Manteno;
17 he visited Washington, D.C. through Honor Flight Chicago and
18 got to see the war memorials and the National Air and Space
19 Museum; and

20 WHEREAS, William Bike was lifelong best friends with his
21 brother, Richard Bike, and was lovingly referred to as Big Bill
22 by his daughter-in-law; he had a wacky sense of humor but was
23 incredibly kind and loving, as well as loyal and quirky; he was

1 a great story-teller, a unique individual, and an amazing
2 father; and

3 WHEREAS, William Bike was preceded in death by his parents;
4 his wife, Jean; his brothers, Joseph LeBike, Frank Bike,
5 Richard Bike, and John Bike; his sister, Jean Bike Kania; and
6 his sister-in-law, Mary Smolen; and

7 WHEREAS, William Bike is survived by his son, William S.
8 Bike; his daughter-in-law, Anne Nordhaus-Bike; his friend,
9 Susan Fong; and several nieces and nephews; therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL
11 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
12 William F. Bike and extend our sincere condolences to his
13 family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be it
14 further

15 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
16 presented to the family of William Bike as an expression of our
17 deepest sympathy.