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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are pleased to congratulate Dr. Stuart Strahl
4 on his retirement as president and chief executive officer of
5 the Chicago Zoological Society after 18 years of service; and

6 WHEREAS, Dr. Strahl has served as the Chicago Zoological
7 Society's (the Society) president and CEO since 2003; he has
8 guided the Society in its mission to inspire conservation
9 leadership by engaging people and communities with wildlife
10 and nature; and

11 WHEREAS, Dr. Strahl received his Bachelor of Arts degree
12 in Biology from Bates College, his Ph.D. in Biology from the
13 State University of New York at Albany, and a Doctor of Humane
14 Letters degree from Dominican University; a well-respected
15 author and distinguished lecturer, he is the principal author
16 of numerous scientific and popular publications and served for
17 over 10 years as the founding chair of the IUCN/SSC Specialist
18 Group on the Avian Family Cracidae; he also has considerable
19 background in higher education and has served as adjunct
20 faculty at the University of Florida, State University of New
21 York, and Washington College, among others; and

22 WHEREAS, A career conservationist with 35 years of

1 experience in applied science, restoration ecology, public
2 policy and not-for-profit management, Dr. Strahl is
3 experienced in bringing together diverse interests around
4 conservation causes; he began his career as a field biologist
5 and later served as the founding director of the Latin
6 American Programs for the Wildlife Conservation Society; his
7 lasting partnerships in the U.S. and Latin America have
8 resulted in the preservation of over 30 million acres of
9 wildlife habitat and over \$18 billion in conservation funding;
10 prior to arriving at the Chicago Zoological Society, as
11 founding president/CEO of Audubon of Florida, he led the
12 National Audubon Society into prominence as the acknowledged
13 private-sector leader in the largest ecological restoration
14 initiative in history, known as the Comprehensive Everglades
15 Restoration Plan; and

16 WHEREAS, Dr. Strahl has served on numerous boards and
17 appointed commissions; he is a member of the board of
18 directors of the Society for Conservation Biology, the Vital
19 Ground Foundation, and the Pickering Creek Audubon Center of
20 the Chesapeake Audubon Society, an elective member of the
21 American Ornithologists' Union, and a professional member of
22 the Boone and Crockett Club, among others; and

23 WHEREAS, As president and CEO, Dr. Strahl led the creation
24 of the Chicago Zoological Society's new Centers of Excellence

1 - the Center for the Science of Animal Care & Welfare, which
2 has enhanced high-level animal care in zoos by applying a
3 broad range of sciences to evaluate and improve animal
4 well-being; the Center for Conservation Leadership serves as a
5 nexus for coordinating fieldwork, zoo-based education, and
6 outreach to change the world by inspiring and engaging as many
7 conservation leaders as possible; and

8 WHEREAS, The Chicago Zoological Society is world-renowned
9 as a leader in animal welfare and veterinary care and produces
10 award-winning conservation programs for people of all
11 abilities; under Dr. Strahl's direction, the Society has
12 developed new and innovative exhibits as well as enduring
13 partnerships that provide service to urban communities of
14 color, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and other
15 vulnerable populations; and

16 WHEREAS, In an effort to connect communities across the
17 region with nature and wildlife, Dr. Strahl encouraged the
18 distribution of millions of free zoo passes in under-resourced
19 communities; he also fostered the creation of an Animal
20 Ambassador program, which brings the zoo's animals outside the
21 park to meet with community members who would not otherwise be
22 able to visit the zoo; and

23 WHEREAS, A passionate advocate for veterans and their

1 families, Dr. Strahl developed strong partnerships with local
2 VA Hospitals and veteran groups, including the Wounded Warrior
3 Project, which holds an annual Soldier Ride at Brookfield Zoo;
4 under his direction, to honor their service, the zoo became
5 free for all active, reservist, and retired members of the
6 military; and

7 WHEREAS, During Dr. Strahl's tenure, Brookfield Zoo
8 welcomed its 150,000,000th guest and was the most popular paid
9 cultural attraction in the Midwest; it also became the first
10 zoo in the world to receive humane certification from the
11 American Humane Society for its exemplary animal care and
12 welfare; and

13 WHEREAS, Brookfield Zoo's campus grew and modernized under
14 Dr. Strahl; this growth fulfilled aspects of a strategic plan
15 focused on animal welfare and the engagement of diverse
16 communities; historical exhibits were transformed into Great
17 Bear Wilderness and Regenstein Wolf Woods, which showcase
18 endangered species of North America; the Children's Zoo became
19 Hamill Family Wild Encounters, which highlights opportunities
20 to get up close and personal with nature; the original Reptile
21 House was transformed into the Mary Ann MacLean Conservation
22 Leadership Center, which houses all of the zoo's educational
23 outreach programs; the newly constructed Pavilions and Hamill
24 Family Nature Plaza provide spaces for guests to relax during

1 their trip to the zoo; and

2 WHEREAS, Dr. Strahl reinforced the Chicago Zoological
3 Society's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and
4 access by implementing comprehensive programs for audience
5 diversity, vendor diversity, and workforce and workplace
6 diversity and inclusion; this was to make Brookfield Zoo an
7 even more welcoming destination for all visitors and to
8 connect people of all backgrounds with conservation through
9 cutting-edge, inclusive programs and experiences; and

10 WHEREAS, Under Dr. Strahl's leadership, the Chicago
11 Zoological Society received over 60 awards from local,
12 national, and international organizations for its educational
13 and conservation programs, inclusive practices, and business
14 acumen; these awards include the Institute of Museum and
15 Library Services' National Medal for Museum Service, the
16 Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Angela Petersen Excellence
17 in Diversity Award and Community Engagement Award for the King
18 Conservation Leadership Academy, the Illinois Association of
19 Museums' Large Institution of the Year Award, the Illinois
20 Department of Human Services' Distinguished Service Award for
21 employment of individuals with disabilities, and the Fuller
22 Park Neighborhood Development Corporation's Community Partner
23 of the Year award, among many others; and

1 WHEREAS, The year 2021 marks the 100 year anniversary of
2 the creation of the Chicago Zoological Society, the non-profit
3 that runs Brookfield Zoo, by the Forest Preserves of Cook
4 County; during his time as CEO, Dr. Strahl strengthened this
5 enduring public private partnership by helping to shape and
6 advance a common recreational, educational, and conservation
7 mission; he served on the Next Century Conservation Plan
8 Commission and Steering Committee where he proposed bold
9 actions to make Cook County a national leader in urban
10 conservation; he was also instrumental in several successful
11 governmental funding efforts that brought much needed revenue
12 to the Forest Preserves of Cook County, the Brookfield Zoo,
13 and the Chicago Botanic Garden; and

14 WHEREAS, An avid outdoorsman, Dr. Strahl and his family
15 enjoy exploring remote natural areas and look forward to
16 spending more time in the wilderness; therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
18 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
19 we congratulate Dr. Stuart Strahl on his retirement, commend
20 his dedication, service, and enormous contribution as
21 president and CEO of the Chicago Zoological Society, and wish
22 him well in all of his future endeavors; and be it further

23 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be

1 presented to Dr. Stuart Strahl as a symbol of our respect and
2 esteem.