



HR0274

LRB102 18329 LAW 26083 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 Leonard
4 J. Kniffel of Lincoln Park, who passed away on March 19, 2021;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, Leonard J. Kniffel was born in Mt. Clemens,
7 Michigan on August 25, 1947; he was raised by his grandmother
8 in rural Michigan; he attended Armada Area Schools; he
9 graduated from Oakland University and moved to Detroit in
10 1970; he earned his master's degree in English and his
11 master's degree in Library Science at Wayne State University
12 in 1975, during which time he worked as a page at the Detroit
13 Public Library; and

14 WHEREAS, Leonard Kniffel worked as a librarian at the
15 Detroit Public Library for 18 years; during his tenure, he
16 traveled extensively as a journalist and ambassador for
17 reading by reporting on the annual conferences of the
18 International Federation of Library Associations and
19 Institutions, which took him across Europe, Asia, Africa, and
20 South America; he was active in programming and outreach to
21 the public, reviewed books for Library Journal, and wrote
22 articles about books for local newspapers and magazines; while
23 working in the library's language and literature department,

1 he became active in the local literary scene and established
2 his own small publishing operation, Fallen Angel Press, and
3 published some dozen poetry chapbooks from 1974 to 1982; he
4 was one of the founders of the Poetry Resource Center (PRC) of
5 Michigan, the editor of the PRC Newsletter, and an organizer
6 of the annual Michigan Poetry Festival; at the same time, he
7 became involved in historic preservation, photography, and
8 video; and

9 WHEREAS, Leonard Kniffel joined the staff of American
10 Libraries, the flagship magazine of the American Library
11 Association (ALA), in Chicago in 1988; he became the managing
12 editor in 1989; he served as the editor-in-chief from 1996 to
13 2011; he oversaw the magazine during a time of change, helping
14 create a modernized website, an online library career center
15 called ALA JobLIST: Jobs in Library and Information Science
16 and Technology, a weekly electronic newsletter titled American
17 Libraries Direct, a video operation, and a web-first
18 publishing model in response to the declining advertising base
19 for print; he wrote numerous news reports, feature articles,
20 and editorials on issues ranging from censorship to public
21 service; he also blogged for ALA's website; he published many
22 photographs in the magazine, including the 1992 cover photo of
23 members from ALA's Gay and Lesbian Task Force marching in the
24 Gay Pride Parade in San Francisco; he was the creator and
25 publisher of the ALA's @ your library public awareness website

1 (www.atyourlibrary.org); he was especially proud of producing
2 the video documentary Loss and Recovery, which covered
3 librarians who witnessed the 9/11 terrorist attacks; he
4 retired from ALA in 2012; and

5 WHEREAS, Leonard Kniffel was an author and blogger; he
6 wrote the travel memoir A Polish Son in the Motherland: An
7 American's Journey Home in 2005; he published Reading with the
8 Stars: A Celebration of Books and Libraries in 2011, which
9 featured interviews he conducted over ten years with such
10 luminous library advocates as President Barack Obama,
11 entertainers Julie Andrews and Jamie Lee Curtis, Microsoft
12 founder Bill Gates, First Lady Laura Bush, and basketball
13 legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar; he produced Musicals on the Silver
14 Screen in 2013; he wrote two memoirs titled Busia: Seasons on
15 the Farm with My Polish Grandmother and Busia: School Days on
16 the Farm with my Polish Grandmother; he ran the blog Polish Son
17 (polishson.com), where he wrote about Poland and shared
18 recipes and stories about his family and articles about
19 libraries; and

20 WHEREAS, Leonard Kniffel was proud of his Polish heritage
21 and became focused on the Polish Diaspora in later years; he
22 was involved in the formation of the Jan Karski Educational
23 Foundation, and he was part of the effort to secure the
24 Presidential Medal of Freedom for Karski and was at the White

1 House when President Obama presented the award posthumously in
2 2011; he became the executive director of the Chicago-based
3 Polish American Librarians Association (PALA) and a member of
4 the Board of Directors of the Polish Museum of America (PMA) in
5 2014; he published *Poland & the Holocaust*, an extensive
6 reading list on the PALA website, in 2015; and

7 WHEREAS, Leonard Kniffel supported many charitable and
8 educational institutions; he enjoyed traveling with his
9 spouse, and he especially enjoyed visiting France and Poland;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, Leonard Kniffel was a leader in the
12 Polish-American and LGBTQ+ communities who was driven by his
13 sense of curiosity and spontaneity; he will be missed; and

14 WHEREAS, Leonard Kniffel is survived by his life partner
15 of almost 43 years, Carlon B. Walker; dozens of cousins; and
16 his many friends and relatives in the U.S., Poland, England,
17 and elsewhere around the world; therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
19 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
20 we mourn the passing of Leonard J. Kniffel and extend our
21 sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew
22 and loved him; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
2 presented to the family of Leonard Kniffel as an expression of
3 our deepest sympathy.