



HR0821

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of former State Representative, gubernatorial Chief of Staff, Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority CEO, and Regional Transportation Authority Chair Jim Reilly, who passed away on Monday, April 4, 2022; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Reilly was born on January 31, 1945 in Springfield, a native of Illinois and a graduate of the Springfield public school system; he graduated from Springfield High School in 1962; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Reilly's college years were spent at Illinois College in Jacksonville, and his law school years were spent at the University of Chicago in Chicago; he received his law degree in 1972; and

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WHEREAS, During his time in law school, Jim Reilly also spent two gap years teaching language arts to eighth-graders in Winchester; and

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WHEREAS, During his time in Winchester and inspired by his father, who had been a Springfield lawyer in general practice as well as a staunch Republican, Jim Reilly did district

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1 office work for a local state representative, Thomas C. Rose;
2 during this time, he made many friends and local connections
3 throughout the Jacksonville area; and

4 WHEREAS, After graduating from law school in 1972 and
5 passing the bar, Jim Reilly was invited to work with a practice
6 in Jacksonville and served as a lawyer in Morgan County,
7 moving laterally to become the first full-time city attorney
8 of Jacksonville; and

9 WHEREAS, When Tom Rose decided not to run for re-election
10 as state representative in 1976, Jim Reilly ran to be one of
11 the three representatives of the Jacksonville-centered 49th
12 District, one of the former multi-member districts that the
13 Illinois House used to have, and he was elected; and

14 WHEREAS, Jim Reilly joined a large class of freshmen
15 Republicans in the 80th General Assembly in January 1977,
16 headed by future Governor Jim Edgar; and

17 WHEREAS, When Jim Edgar became the legislative liaison for
18 Governor Jim Thompson in 1979, Thompson and Edgar began
19 working closely with Jim Reilly as a gubernatorial ally and
20 lawmaker in the Illinois House of Representatives; and

21 WHEREAS, Jim Reilly then became Governor Thompson's chief

1 counsel in 1983; after the Governor's then-Chief of Staff Art
2 Quern left a few months later, Gov. Thompson promoted Jim
3 Reilly to be his chief of staff; and

4 WHEREAS, In 1985, one of the major events in public policy
5 of that year was a major cost overrun in a construction project
6 in Chicago, the structure that became the McCormick Place
7 North Building with 705,500 square feet of exhibit space;
8 built to maintain what was then McCormick Place's identity as
9 the world's largest convention center, the construction
10 project developed a major cost overrun that required a State
11 bailout; and

12 WHEREAS, Jim Reilly's chief-of-staff leadership helped
13 develop bipartisan support for the bailout; the governmental
14 structure of McCormick Place was reorganized, and the new law
15 achieved a record of cooperation between the State of
16 Illinois, the City of Chicago, and the Chicago area on
17 infrastructure issues; and

18 WHEREAS, In his fourth campaign for the Governor's chair
19 in 1986, Jim Thompson made "Build Illinois" infrastructure a
20 key plank in his election effort and was re-elected; and

21 WHEREAS, Jim Reilly left Springfield in 1989 to become the
22 chief executive officer of the Metropolitan Pier and

1 Exposition Authority, the governing authority over McCormick
2 Place; under his leadership, State and Chicago-area
3 infrastructure issues had a common point of intersection; and

4 WHEREAS, In 1993, Governor Jim Edgar asked Jim Reilly to
5 return to the gubernatorial chief of staff office; and

6 WHEREAS, In his second term as chief of staff, Jim Reilly
7 helped lead negotiations and put together the first Hospital
8 Assessment Program to close the growing gap in Medicaid
9 funding between State general revenues and medical care costs;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, After working in 1994 through Governor Edgar's
12 successful re-election that year, Jim Reilly returned to the
13 Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA); from
14 1995-1999, the MPEA oversaw construction and completion of the
15 McCormick Place South Building and the renovation of Chicago's
16 Navy Pier; and

17 WHEREAS, In 1999, Jim Reilly joined the private sector,
18 becoming the CEO of the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau,
19 continuing until 2004 in his role as a coordinator of what has
20 become one of northeastern Illinois's largest industries; and

21 WHEREAS, Cutting back from full-time service, Jim Reilly

1 became the non-executive chairperson of the Regional
2 Transportation Authority (RTA) in 2005, continuing his record
3 of prioritizing infrastructure and bringing people from all
4 regions and political parties together; he helped lead the
5 financial and governmental restructuring of the RTA and served
6 in this role for five years until 2010; and

7 WHEREAS, When the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition
8 Authority ran into a new funding crisis similar to that of
9 1985, Jim Reilly was there; returning to the MPEA as CEO once
10 again in 2012 and serving until 2015; and

11 WHEREAS, Continuing his lifelong interest in
12 infrastructure, Jim Reilly also chaired the Capital
13 Development Board, the senior panel overseeing State-financed
14 non-transportation capital projects; and

15 WHEREAS, Although his final decades were spent in Chicago,
16 Jim Reilly remained a downstater in his heart; to his last day,
17 he maintained his lifelong loyalty to the St. Louis Cardinals;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, A tower of strength to Jim Reilly in his final
20 decades, as he worked to bring people together, was his wife
21 Veronica Lynch, who has her own ties and history with the
22 highest levels of Illinois politics; and

1 WHEREAS, On the opposite side of Lake Michigan from
2 McCormick Place and Navy Pier, Jim Reilly and Veronica Lynch
3 owned the Sandpiper Inn in Union Pier, Michigan, which they
4 operated as a bed and breakfast inn for guests during their
5 ownership; and

6 WHEREAS, During their ownership, guests could go to the
7 Sandpiper Inn and, on weekends, eat downstate Illinois-style
8 pancake breakfasts cooked personally by the former two-time
9 gubernatorial chief of staff; therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
11 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
12 we mourn the death of Jim Reilly, a major figure in the history
13 of Chicago and in the history of the entire State of Illinois;
14 and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That we recognize the heritage that Jim Reilly
16 and other men and women like him leave behind them as forgers
17 of consensus and agreement on challenging issues of public
18 policy; instead of tearing things apart, he put things
19 together like sections of track in the model train sets that he
20 loved; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be

1 presented to Jim Reilly's wife, Veronica Lynch, as a token of
2 our esteem and gratitude for the life of Jim Reilly of
3 Illinois.