



HR0408

LRB096 12918 KXB 26821 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 Ben  
4 Meeker, former Chief Probation Officer of the U.S. District  
5 Court for the Northern District of Illinois and global  
6 consultant on criminal justice issues, on March 8, 2009; and

7           WHEREAS, Mr. Meeker received an A.B. degree from the  
8 College of Emporia in Kansas and later used the insurance  
9 proceeds from the loss of his car in a flash flood to help pay  
10 for his master's degree from the University of Chicago's School  
11 of Social Service Administration; and

12           WHEREAS, Mr. Meeker served in the Navy during World War II;  
13 after returning home, he took a faculty position at Indiana  
14 University where he taught courses in probation and  
15 corrections, including prison management; and

16           WHEREAS, Mr. Meeker left Indiana University to take the  
17 position of Chief Probation Officer of the U.S. District Court  
18 for the Northern District of Illinois where he worked for the  
19 next 23 years; while serving in this position, Mr. Meeker  
20 collaborated with members of the University of Chicago's Law  
21 School and School of Social Service Administration to establish  
22 a training program for probation officers; for the next 20

1 years he directed the Federal Probation Training Center  
2 preparing U.S. probation officers from throughout the nation;  
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Mr. Meeker understood that the federal probation  
5 system is an arm of the courts, not part of the prosecution; he  
6 knew that the mission of a probation officer is to help people  
7 change and protect society if people do not change; he believed  
8 that if a probation officer treats a person as he could be, he  
9 will become what he should be; he demanded professionalism and  
10 insisted on master's degrees, mostly in social work, for the  
11 probation officers in his charge; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1954, following the enactment of the first  
13 adult probation and parole law in the German Federal Republic,  
14 Mr. Meeker was invited by the German Ministry of Justice to  
15 assist in setting up a modern probation system; after a three  
16 and a half month stay that took him to more than 30 cities  
17 throughout Germany, Mr. Meeker returned home to declare that,  
18 "Western civilization is the cradle of probation"; and

19 WHEREAS, In 1953 and again in 1972, Mr. Meeker was invited  
20 to serve as a consultant on probation training to the  
21 Commonwealth Courts of Puerto Rico; in 1966 he received a  
22 Fulbright Award to conduct a series of training institutes and  
23 conferences on probation methods in the major cities of Japan;

1 he has been honored by the 1963 John Howard Association Award,  
2 the 1964 Doyle Award of the Federal Probation Officers  
3 Association, a group that in 1995 named a scholarship in his  
4 honor, and the 1967 Halpern Award of the National Council on  
5 Crime and Delinquency; and

6 WHEREAS, After retiring from the U.S. District Court in  
7 1973, Mr. Meeker joined the University of Chicago Law School  
8 Center for Studies in Criminal Justice; he also served as  
9 Adjunct Professor in the Department of Social Justice at the  
10 University of Illinois Circle Campus; and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. Meeker's innovative use of ex-offenders as  
12 paraprofessionals has contributed to the improvement of  
13 Federal supervision of parolees; he has contributed to the  
14 methodological development of social work as an academic study  
15 through his published works and cooperation with institutions  
16 educating social workers; and

17 WHEREAS, The passing of Mr. Meeker will be deeply felt by  
18 his wife, Mila; his son John; his daughter Virginia; his  
19 sister, Mary Wilson; and his three grandchildren and two  
20 great-grandchildren; therefore, be it

21 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
22 NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we

1 mourn, along with his family, friends, and the many people  
2 whose lives were touched by him, the passing of Ben Meeker; and  
3 be it further

4       RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
5 presented to the family of Ben Meeker as a symbol of our  
6 sincere sympathy.