



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF JANE MARGARET BYRNE

WHEREAS, God, in His infinite wisdom, has called an iconic political leader, Jane Byrne, renowned for her brilliant intellect, for the vibrancy and warmth of her person, for her deeply principled integrity, for her pioneering work and trailblazing as a woman in politics, government and academia; and

WHEREAS, Jane Margaret Byrne was born on May 24, 1933 in Chicago, Illinois to William Patrick Burke and Katherine Marie Nolan; and

WHEREAS, in 1955 she graduated from Barat College of the Sacred Heart in Lake Forest, Illinois where she later attended the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she took classes toward receiving a teaching certificate; and

WHEREAS, in 1956 she married William P. Byrne, a Marine who later died in a plane crash in 1959. The couple had a daughter, Katherine C. Byrne. Ms. Byrne remarried in 1978 to a journalist Jay McMullen until his death from cancer in 1992; and

WHEREAS, in 1960, Ms. Byrne first entered into politics as a volunteer for John F. Kennedy's campaign for President of the United States where she first met Mayor Richard J. Daley; and

WHEREAS, in 1968 Ms. Byrne was appointed by Mayor Richard J. Daley to head the Chicago Consumer Affairs Department until 1977; and

WHEREAS, in 1977 Ms. Byrne launched a campaign to unseat Mayor Michael Bilandic in the 1979 Democratic mayoral primary in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, Ms. Byrne defeated Bilandic in the mayoral primary and went on to win the general election, becoming not only the first female to hold the position of mayor in Chicago but the first woman elected mayor of any major U.S. city ; and

WHEREAS, as Mayor of Chicago, Ms. Byrne made inclusive decisions and some accomplishments include her signing ordinances to get handguns off the street, bringing transparency to the city's budget process, and revitalizing the business district known as the Loop and helping turn Navy Pier into a waterfront mall; and

WHEREAS, her maverick, and sometimes combative, style did not always please City Hall or government employees, facing strikes by labor unions and the city's transit workers, public school teachers and fire fighters; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, Ms. Byrne was defeated in Chicago's Democratic mayoral primary by Harold Washington, where he then went on to win the general election. She ran against Mayor Washington in the 1987 Democratic primary but was narrowly defeated. She endorsed Washington for the general election where he won. She attempted a final unsuccessful run for mayor against Mayor Richard M. Daley in 1991; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Byrne was active in politics for 30 years and her reputation remains as a trailblazer and pioneer for countless women in Chicago and in politics where her legacy of tireless public service will never be forgotten because of her strength, courage and commitment; and

WHEREAS, in losing Jane Byrne we have lost a woman who never gave up the fight.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Jane Byrne's memory shall be cherished in all of the hearts of the people whom she touched and loved.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners, on behalf of the residents of Cook County, does hereby express its deepest condolences and most heartfelt sympathy to the family as well as the many friends, colleagues and loved ones of Jane Byrne, and may a suitable copy of this resolution be tendered to her family herewith.