



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 15-5826, **Version:** 1

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### **PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

#### **COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MURIEL CHALEM**

**WHEREAS**, Muriel Chalem, a woman whose life was devoted to family, faith and community died at the age of 91 leaving friends, family and a community profoundly enriched for having known her; and

**WHEREAS** Muriel Chalem, often described as quietly remarkable, was a woman whose numerous accomplishments were anything but quiet and were most certainly remarkable; she represented the best qualities of humanity through her life-long work as an activist and community leader; and

**WHEREAS**, Muriel Chalem and her husband Richard Chalem were married in 1947. In 1954 they moved the family to Evanston to raise their family and enroll them in schools that reflected their deeply held progressive values of inclusion and opportunity for all. In Evanston they became treasured neighbors and community leaders; and

**WHEREAS**, Muriel Chalem understood the vital importance of the arts, she had an idea that would ultimately lead her to create First Night Evanston, an enduring and popular New Year's Eve family event that celebrates all types of artistic expression. For many years she was a vital and valued member of the Board of Directors of Next Theater in Evanston and she served as president of the Evanston Arts Council which was responsible for producing some of the most popular city art festivals in the region; and

**WHEREAS**, Muriel Chalem worked for many years at Evanston School District 65's Haven Middle School where she was adored by the students and became an indispensable member of the team. The principal at Haven who later was elected mayor of the city of Evanston, Lorraine Morton described Muriel as "her right arm" and added that "Muriel was lovely and nice to absolutely everyone"; and

**WHEREAS**, later, after she retired from Haven she became a trusted aide to Illinois State Senator Arthur Berman and assisted in staffing his constituent services office in Rogers Park and Evanston; and

**WHEREAS**, Muriel Chalem was a respected community leader throughout her life. Her deeply held religious beliefs led her to establish the first Conservative synagogue in Evanston, Mikdosh El Synagogue; and

**WHEREAS**, Muriel Chalem was a lover of sports and, along with her late husband they helped found the United Soccer Association of Evanston and encouraged the participation of their children and grandchildren in numerous sports programs; and

**WHEREAS**, Muriel Chalem's many contributions were recognized in 2004 when she received the Unsung Heroine Award from the Cook County Commission on Women's Issues as part of their annual event honoring outstanding women leaders at their Women's History Month Awards; and

**WHEREAS**, Muriel Chalem's kindness and generosity were treasured by her Monday Bridge Club and by her dear friends and fellow opera-goers. She was a person who enjoyed late nights and Frank Sinatra songs. Those who knew and loved Muriel were charmed by her lack of interest in nearly anything that took place before 11:00am in the morning; her email and car license plate were proudly entitled RyzsL8; and

**WHEREAS**, Muriel Chalem was a tireless supporter of progressive values. She spent much of her free time working to promote the values of the Democratic Party. Her fundraisers were legendary. Muriel was one of the founders of the Democratic Party of Evanston, an organization that, thanks to her tireless efforts has grown to be one of the largest in the state. While well into her 80's Muriel was still a vibrant part of the organization, memorably traveling to Springfield at the crack of dawn and well before 11:00 in the morning to attend the announcement of Barack Obama when he entered the race for president of the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, Muriel Chalem was cherished not just in her community she was also a much loved mother of four children, Claire Chalem-White (Dale White), Michael Chalem (Sylvia Chalem), Alan Chalem (Heidi Essig-Chalem) and Frances (Stephen) Fontana. She was the proud grandmother and will be sorely missed by her grandchildren: Ashley, Courtney, Jackie, Mark, Caitlin, Richard "Tyler", Dylan, Danielle, and Patrick; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County commemorates the extraordinary life and accomplishments of Muriel Chalem, and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions she has made to the Citizens of Cook County, Illinois; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and that an official copy of the same be tendered to the family of Muriel Chalem.