



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 16-3706, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

COMMEMORATING THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ELLIOT LEHMAN

WHEREAS, Elliot Lehman, pioneering leader in business, philanthropist and advocate for social justice died at the age of 97 leaving behind family, countless friends and a community enriched for having known him;

WHEREAS, Elliot Lehman was born in the Bronx on Jan. 10, 1919. His father, Saul, emigrated from near Bialystok in present-day Poland at the age of 13, and went into business in New York as a printer. He graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School in New York and graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in journalism

WHEREAS, Elliot Lehman served his country during the Second World War. He served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, commanding a wooden submarine chaser in the South Pacific theater. Although he never saw combat, he survived three typhoons; and

WHEREAS, while attending the University of Wisconsin, Elliot Lehman met a Chicagoan named Frances Mecklenburger and the two married in 1940 and settled in Illinois. Elliot joined the Mecklenburger family business, the Felt Products Manufacturing Co., later known as Fel-Pro, a manufacturer of gaskets and sealants. Following his father-in-law's death in 1961, Elliot served as Fel-Pro's co-chairman for three decades, and remained co-chairman emeritus until the company was sold in 1998. He built Fel-Pro gaskets to a dominant position in supplying both heavy-duty trucks and the automotive aftermarket; and

WHEREAS, Elliot Lehman worked for Fel-Pro for over 50 years, most of them as co-chairman with his brother-in-law, Lewis Weinberg. Under their leadership, the Skokie based company became not only a leader in its industry but a widely recognized leader in employee relations, with benefits that included scholarship programs, on-site day care and summer camp for workers' children. They may have sacrificed some profit to run their family-friendly company, but they maintained the highest standards in their products. In 1997, Fel-Pro was named 4th best place to work in Fortune magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For." The company was not just a leader in the automotive parts industry, admired by peers and competitors, they were a national leader in innovative Human Resources practices; and

WHEREAS, Elliot Lehman will long be remembered for his commitment to excellence in business and particularly in business ethics. He was an early supporter of Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, a not-for-profit research, education and social welfare organization with a mission to create a just society. BPI played a major role in fair housing issues. Fel-Pro pioneered employee inclusion and rights. Elliot Lehman served BPI Chicago as its second president from 1972 to 1977; and

WHEREAS, Elliot Lehman's business acumen and professionalism singled him out for distinction and he was regularly honored. He was named Motor Magazine's Automotive Aftermarket Man of the Year and the Automotive Warehouse Distributors Association's Man of the Year and received the Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association's Triangle Award, its highest honor. In 1993 he was inducted into the Automotive Hall of Fame in Dearborn, Michigan; and

WHEREAS, Elliot Lehman was a tireless civic leader, dedicated to the communities in which he lived and worked. He was dedicated to promoting inclusion and justice in the world around him. While he chaired the board of Business and

Professional People for the Public Interest it fought the Gautreaux case to desegregate and deconcentrate public housing in Chicago. He served as founding president of Project TEAM, a program that trained socially disadvantaged young people to become automotive mechanics. He also served on the boards of, among others, the Jewish Children's Bureau, Martha's Vineyard Community Services, Voices for Illinois Children, Winning Workplaces, and Working in the Schools; and

WHEREAS, the loss of Elliot Lehman to the community is significant. He will be missed by countless friends and neighbors in Wilmette as well as his long-time summer residence in Chilmark on Martha's Vineyard. His loss will be most acutely by his wife of over seventy-five years Frances, three children, Kenneth Lehman (Lucy Lehman) Kay Lehman Schlozman (Stanley Schlozman), and Paul Lehman (Ronna Stamm), eight grandchildren, Betsy Lehman Levisay (Justin Levisay) Amy Lehman (Michele Rugani), Peter Lehman (Mary Liz Lehman), Daniel Schlozman, Julia Schlozman, Jonathan Lehman (Zachary Huelsing), Michael Lehman and Elizabeth Lehman (Kathleen Moody), and six great-grandchildren, Benjamin, Charles, and Audrey Levisay, Maxwell Lehman and Madeleine and Molly Lehman; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Commissioners of Cook County that the Board on behalf of the nearly the 5.2 million residents of Cook County commemorates the extraordinary life of Elliot Lehman, and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions he has made to the Citizens of Cook County, Illinois;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this text be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and a suitable copy of same be tendered to the family of Elliot Lehman, that his memory may be so honored.