



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 20-1207, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING KULMEET “BOB” GALHOTRA

WHEREAS, Kulmeet “Bob” Galhotra retired from the Cook County Public Defender’s Office in December 2019 after serving 29 years as an Assistant Public Defender. At the time of his retirement, he was a supervisor in the Homicide Task Force, a special unit in the Public Defender’s office that represents defendants in homicide and capital cases; and

WHEREAS, born in India - where he was nicknamed “Bob” by family members, for either Bobby Kennedy or the Bollywood film “Bobby”. Galhotra moved to Chicago with his family at age 5. Reflecting on his move, Galhotra remembered that there was snow on the ground the day they arrived. There was not even a word for “snow” in Punjabi, his first language; and

WHEREAS, Bob was raised in Chicago with his brother, who is now a doctor. He started college at Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) as an engineering student but switched majors to English. He graduated with Honors in 1987. After a short internship writing technical manuals, he registered for law school at IIT Chicago Kent Law School. His first experience through a clinic in a criminal courtroom hooked him on criminal defense work. He was hired by the Cook County Public Defender two days after taking the bar exam; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure at the Public Defender’s office, Bob has undertaken 30 murder trials in front of juries and nearly 100 bench trials. A number of his cases were widely publicized, including the recent Harris case out of Rockford, Illinois and the Andrew Warren case. Bob successfully negotiated a plea agreement for Warren, who was charged, along with former Northwestern University professor Wyndham Lathem, with the murder of Lathem’s boyfriend; and

WHEREAS, Bob was recognized by his peers for his encyclopedic knowledge of case law and the increasingly technical aspects of criminal law from DNA to cellphone technology. He also had great insight into the temperament and taboos of the judges who decide the fates of the 400 plus indigent murder defendants on the Task Force’s roster; and

WHEREAS, one of Bob’s great accomplishments at the Public Defender’s office was his role in forming AFSCME Local 3315, now the largest union of attorneys in Illinois. He was on the Executive Board from 1998-1999 and served as Vice President from 1999-2001 and in 2007; and served as President from 2002-2006 and 2008-2013. In these positions, he represented approximately 450 rank-and-file Assistant Public Defenders; and

WHEREAS, Bob’s commitment to representing indigent defendants was followed closely by his commitment to strengthening the union and ensuring that other public defenders had the support necessary to do their jobs effectively. Through this work he successfully advocated for the recognition of collective bargaining rights for assistant public defenders under local home rule by Cook County ordinance; managed and organized the participation of the state’s largest attorney union in a one-day strike to win a fair contract for front-line public servants in Cook County (7/11/2002); chaired four delegations from Local 3315 to Universal Bargaining with the County; boosted full union dues-paying membership to 100%; amended the local’s constitution to lengthen the terms of office from one year to two; and implemented an online presence for the Local in 2006; and

WHEREAS, through his work with Local 3315, he also helped advocate for the repeal of the death penalty in Illinois and founded the Jack Carey Memorial Scholarship that recognizes outstanding law clerks at the Public Defender’s office. The scholarship has been awarded nearly 50 times since its inception in 2002; and

WHEREAS, throughout his career, Bob has shown a dedication to public service and has personally and professionally served the needs of many of the County's most vulnerable residents at a time of great need. He achieved a high level of responsibility in his professional life and was recognized by his peers as a great resource to them in the Public Defender's office.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County, celebrates the work of Kulmeet "Bob" Galhotra, and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions he 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 same be tendered to Kulmeet "Bob" Galhotra.