



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE HONORABLE JOHN EDWARD PORTER

WHEREAS, John Edward Porter, a Republican Congressman from Illinois' 10th congressional district, died on June 3, 2022 following a brief hospitalization. He was born June 1, 1935 in Evanston, Illinois and graduated from Evanston Township High School in 1953. He attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology for two years before graduating with a B.A. from Northwestern University in 1957. He subsequently earned his law degree from the University of Michigan Law School. Porter was an honor law graduate attorney with the U.S. Justice Department in the Kennedy Administration before entering private practice in Evanston in 1963. A military veteran, he served in the Army Reserves from 1958 to 1964; and

WHEREAS, Porter came from a family steeped in public service. His father, the Hon. Harry H. Porter served for many years as Chief Judge of the Evanston Municipal Court. Porter was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives from 1973 until 1979. While in Springfield, he was successful in passing legislation creating government inducements to carpooling; denying pension rights to public officials convicted of a felony; prohibiting flammable tents and outdoor-use fabrics; and requiring disclosure of secret beneficiaries of land trusts involved in business with state government; and

WHEREAS, Porter was elected to Congress in 1980 where he served until 2001. During his tenure, Porter became one of the powerful "cardinals" in Congress who served on the United States House Committee on Appropriations and chaired a key appropriations subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services and Education, and Related Agencies. Under his subcommittee's jurisdiction were all the health programs and agencies except U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), including National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and all of the education programs and agencies of the federal government. Per Porter, "We are dealing with some of the most important programs and initiatives by government that affect the most at-risk people in our society. I'm talking about student financial assistance, the federal government's role in primary and secondary education, job training programs, aid to the disabled, adult and vocational education, public broadcasting - lots of things that I think are very, very important to people in this country." It was through Porter that funding for the National Institutes of Health doubled within five years, helping to lay the groundwork for the mapping of the human genome project as well as in increased research for cancer, HIV, Alzheimer's disease and diabetes. "John Porter's legacy is one of longer, healthier lives, not just for our nation but the world," said former U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk, and former Porter chief of staff; and

WHEREAS, Porter was a staunch fiscal conservative who railed against the deficit spending encouraged by President Ronald Reagan's administration. But he also held moderate social views as an early supporter of green environmental initiatives and his backing of abortion and other women's rights. Porter supported the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Wilderness Protection Act, the National Park Protection Act and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. He was instrumental in securing federal funds to build three reservoirs along the North Branch of the Chicago River to ease flood problems there. He voted for the Endangered Species Act and against the inhumane use of animals in product testing and the use of leghold traps. He sought to tie U.S. foreign lending to developing nations to their efforts to protect tropical rainforests and wetlands; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, as a congressional overseer of the Helsinki Accords, Porter went to Moscow with a list of 694 dissidents who'd been barred from leaving the Soviet Union. Within a week, all but one had been released; and

WHEREAS, following the trip to the Soviet Union, Porter founded and served as Co-Chairman of the Congressional

Human Rights Caucus, a voluntary association of more than 250 Members of Congress working to identify, monitor, and end human rights violations worldwide. He co-authored legislation creating Radio Free Asia and served as Chair of the Global Legislators Organized for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE USA); and

WHEREAS, after serving in Congress, Porter became a partner and served as Senior Advisor to the international law firm Hogan Lovells. He served as Chair Emeritus of Research!America and was Vice-Chair of the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health. He was member of the National Academy of Medicine and for 32 years, was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Porter was also a member of the Inter-American Dialogue. He was Chairman of the Public Broadcasting Service, a trustee of the Brookings Institution and served on the boards of the RAND Corporation, the American Heart Association, the PBS Foundation, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Among over 275 awards for his service in Congress is the Mary Wood Lasker Award for Public Service in 2000 "for wise and perceptive leadership on behalf of medical research funding and a deep commitment to strengthening the science enterprise;" and

WHEREAS, the 84,500 square foot John Edward Porter Neuroscience Research Center on the campus of the National Institutes of Health is named in his honor. It was dedicated on March 31, 2014. Porter is the 2014 recipient of the National Academy of Sciences Public Welfare Medal, the Academy's highest honor. He received the Albert Sabin Hero of Science Award from Americans for Medical Progress for his consistent advocacy for medical research; and

WHEREAS, locally, following the closure of the U.S. Army's Fort Sheridan on the North Shore, Porter worked with local communities and persuaded the federal government to transfer 290 acres of open space to the Lake County Forest Preserve District. He also led the Superfund cleanup of PCB-plagued Waukegan Harbor and secured federal funds to build three reservoirs along the North Branch of the Chicago River to ease flood problems; and

WHEREAS, Porter is pre-deceased by his parents, Judge Harry H. and Beatrice (Bea) Vahle Porter, and his sister Ann Carrington. He is survived by his wife Amy McGuire Porter; children and stepchildren John, David, Annie, Robyn, Donna, McKay and Michelle; and fourteen grandchildren.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County, honors the life and work of the Hon. John Edward Porter and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions he 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 the family of the Hon. John Edward Porter.