



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE AND WORK OF STEPHEN W. BAKER

WHEREAS, Stephen W. Baker, a retired assistant Cook County Public Defender, passed away June 10, 2022, in Park Ridge, Illinois. He was a resident of Des Plaines, Illinois. Steve was born Oct. 5, 1952, in Harvey, Illinois, to Josephine (Garfield) and Walter H. Baker. He grew up in Hazel Crest, Illinois, and attended Western Illinois University; and

WHEREAS, Steve earned his J.D. in 1978 from Loyola University Law School, Chicago, and dedicated his life to working in and reforming the criminal justice system. He began his career as a prosecutor working for the Rock Island State's Attorney after he was admitted to the bar; and

WHEREAS, in 1987, he became a deputy public defender with the DuPage County, eventually becoming the DuPage County Public Defender in 1995 where he served until 2003; and

WHEREAS, Steve had an excellent reputation as a trial attorney and continued practicing until 2019 when he retired from the Office of the Cook County Public Defender; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his litigation responsibilities, Steve served as the legislative liaison from 2004 to 2019 for the Cook County Public Defender to the Illinois House and Senate promoting legislation that would improve the adult and juvenile criminal justice systems. Steve also served on the Board of Directors of the Office of the State Appellate Defender; and

WHEREAS, in 2012, Steve was honored as the first recipient of the Illinois Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers "The Promotion of Social Justice Award." The announcement from IACDL notes, "A lawyer since 1978, Stephen W. Baker has served the Illinois criminal defense community for decades both in the courtrooms - as an Assistant Public Defender, as the Public Defender of DuPage County, and in the halls of the Illinois Legislature. He worked vigorously for groups such as the Cook County Public Defender's Office, the Illinois Public Defender Association, the Illinois State Bar Association, and the Illinois Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. Steve fought tirelessly for years against an unending tide of efforts to increase sentences, expand the scope of Illinois criminal laws, shrink our civil liberties, and keep the death penalty. His efforts merit his selection as the first recipient of IACDL's Promotion of Social Justice Award;" and

WHEREAS, Steve was predeceased by his parents and his wife, Joy E. Mason-Baker. He loved playing golf, fishing, and being with family. He is survived by his sister, Susan (Michael) Schumer of Mt. Prospect and his nephews Peter Schumer (Mary Mitchell) of New York state and Christopher (Catherine Ro) Schumer; and grand-nephew Ben Schumer and grand-niece Emma Schumer, of Chicago. Steve leaves behind many friends and family members who remember him dearly.

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 Stephen W. Baker 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 Stephen W. Baker.