



HR0873

LRB103 41749 MST 74970 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of James M. "Jim" Kelly Sr., who passed away on May 30, 2024; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Kelly, a World War II veteran and Urbana firefighter, gave his entire life to public service for his local community and county; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Kelly, one of nine children, was born to Timothy Milton Kelly and Ruth Blythe Frazier Kelly in Findlay on December 29, 1921; the family moved to Urbana in 1925; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Kelly graduated from Urbana High School in 1940 and started working for the P & E Railroad Company; however, with the United States' entry into World War II in 1941, he immediately registered for the draft but was denied due to his job being declared essential; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Kelly petitioned the railroad company to release him multiple times throughout the war, and on January 1, 1944, he was officially released and eligible to register for the draft, which he gladly did; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Kelly married his high school sweetheart,

1 Leila Mae Roughton, on July 8, 1944 in Los Angeles, California
2 prior to beginning his service; and

3 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly affectionately called Leila his "Rosie
4 the Riveter" because she worked on the assembly line
5 manufacturing airplanes to be used in the war while waiting
6 for him to return home; and

7 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly joined the United States Marine Corps
8 and was stationed at Camp Pendleton, California, where he was
9 assigned to the Fifth Service Battalion, 28th Marine Regiment
10 of the 5th Marine Division, with the next stop being the Battle
11 of Iwo Jima; and

12 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly fought valiantly for his country for
13 the entire 36-day battle; he sadly lost his close friend and
14 fellow Urbana High School classmate, Richard L. Pittman, on
15 February 21, 1945 and three of his service battalion buddies
16 in the battle when they were hit by a mortar round as the four
17 of them were delivering ammunitions and supplies to the front;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly returned home to Urbana on May 10, 1946
20 and began his career and family, welcoming a daughter, Cheryl
21 Ann "CJ" Johnson, and a son, James Milton Kelly II; and

1 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly and Leila retired and eventually became
2 snowbirds, staying in the Tropic Isles Mobile Home Park in
3 Palmetto, Florida from November to April; and

4 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly's fondest memories throughout his life
5 were caddying for Horton Smith, the first Master's champion,
6 in 1932, and getting a beer from his favorite actor, John
7 Wayne, at Laguna Beach, California; and

8 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly was a strong supporter of the World War
9 II Memorial in Washington, D.C. and The National World War II
10 Museum in New Orleans and a lifetime member of the VFW,
11 American Legion, Masons, and the Marine Corps League; he also
12 belonged to the Elks Club for 40 years; and

13 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly has been recognized for various
14 accomplishments by State Senator Stan Weaver, U.S.
15 Representative Tim Johnson, Governor Dwight Green, Governor
16 James Thompson, Governor George Ryan, Secretary of State Jesse
17 White, President Donald Trump, and President Joe Biden; and

18 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly was preceded in death by his wife of 66
19 years, Leila; his parents; his brothers, Elston Ward, Walter
20 Kendall, Paul Tyrus, and Robert Walker; his sisters, Ola
21 Margorine, Ione Imogene, Eleanor Ruth, and Marjorie Geneese;
22 his son-in-law, Ken Johnson; and his daughter in-law, Anita

1 Morris; and

2 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly is survived by his children, Cheryl Ann
3 "CJ" Johnson and James Milton Kelly II; his grandchildren,
4 Kelly (Eric) Johnson, Kevin (Brandon) Bowersox-Johnson, Jaime
5 Hagg, and Kathrine (Erik) Hagerman; and his
6 great-grandchildren, Abigayl, Parker, Bryce, Samantha,
7 Garrett, Aneela, and Erik Jr.; and

8 WHEREAS, Jim Kelly's service and dedication will be
9 remembered by all who knew and loved him as we sadly lose
10 another hero from the World War II generation; therefore, be
11 it

12 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
13 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
14 we mourn the passing of James M. "Jim" Kelly Sr. and extend our
15 sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew
16 and loved him; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
18 presented to the family of Jim Kelly as an expression of our
19 deepest sympathy.