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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened to learn of the death of Thomas A. "Tom" Hernandez of Plainfield, who passed away on April 15, 2024; and

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WHEREAS, Tom Hernandez was born to Danna and Anthony Paul Hernandez on January 16, 1966; he attended F.E. Marsh Elementary School, Gompers Junior High School, and Joliet East High School, and he graduated from Joliet Central High School in 1984; he received a Bachelor of Science from Lewis University in 1988; and

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WHEREAS, For over 35 years, Tom Hernandez worked as a communications and marketing professional in a variety of areas, including traditional journalism, public relations, private-sector marketing, and public speaking; he was a regular correspondent for The Herald-News in Joliet from 1986 to 1988, a reporter for The Beacon-News from 1988 to 1992, a reporter and editor for the Pioneer Press from 1992 to 1996, and a weekly columnist for the Plainfield Sun from 1998 to 2009; and

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WHEREAS, Tom Hernandez then served as a communications specialist for the Illinois State Board of Education from 1996 to 2001 and as director of community relations at St. Charles

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1 Community Unit School District 303 from 2001 to 2006; he spent
2 most of his career as director of community relations at
3 Plainfield Community Consolidated School District 202, where
4 he worked from 2006 to 2023; during his tenure, he managed and
5 produced all internal and external communications for the
6 fifth largest school district in Illinois, including all
7 regular and crisis communications and special projects, and
8 served as the district's media and community liaison; and

9 WHEREAS, Tom Hernandez was a highly sought-after emcee for
10 many events, including a poetry anthology unveiling at the
11 Plainfield Public Library District and District 202's CAPE
12 Awards; he also served as a keynote speaker for the inaugural
13 Nolan and Gloria McCants Scholarship program; and

14 WHEREAS, Tom Hernandez was a member of the former Great
15 Read community literacy program and a founding member of the
16 Plainfield School District 202 Foundation for Excellence; he
17 was a past member of United Way of Will County, where he
18 formerly served as secretary, treasurer, and board chair, and
19 he also served in the Education Division and on the Program &
20 Allocations Committee; he was also instrumental in creating
21 United Way's 2-1-1 Will County, a free, multilingual, and
22 confidential 24-hour information and referral service on
23 health and human services in Will County; and

1 WHEREAS, Tom Hernandez was a member of the Illinois
2 chapter of the National School Public Relations Association
3 (NSPRA), and he was named a Distinguished Communicator in 2018
4 and received an Award of Excellence in 2020 for D202 Talks: A
5 Conversation with D202'S First Director of Digital Learning
6 and Innovation; and

7 WHEREAS, Tom Hernandez was the co-leader of WriteOn
8 Joliet, a welcoming, diverse group of writers of varied
9 skills, interests, and experience, and he contributed to all
10 eight anthologies the group produced; he also authored several
11 books, including Chocolate Cows and Purple Cheese, and Other
12 Tales from the Homefront in 2009, Abundance in 2012, The Edge
13 of Middle - Thoughts from the Top of the Hill in 2017, The
14 Acorn Wars in 2019, The Weekly Fruit and Vegetable Report in
15 2020, and Brothers: and Other Stories in 2021; and

16 WHEREAS, Tom Hernandez valued his faith and family above
17 all else; and

18 WHEREAS, Tom Hernandez was preceded in death by his
19 father; his uncle, Ray Hernandez; his grandparents, Charmaine
20 Hurt, Epifanio Hernandez, and Felisa Hernandez; and his aunts,
21 Eudella Asa, Elvira Ibarra, and Catherine Hernandez; and

22 WHEREAS, Tom Hernandez is survived by his wife of 34

1 years, Kellie (Madison) Hernandez; his daughters, Emma (Jake)
2 Williams and Olivia (Tyler) Mueller; his granddaughter, Riley
3 Williams; his mother, Danna (Robert Jensby) Hernandez; his
4 brothers, Tim Hernandez and Paul (Kari) Hernandez; his
5 parents-in-law, Jim Madison and Lynn Madison; his
6 sister-in-law, Amy (Earl Amos) Madison; his aunt-in-law, Jeri
7 Madison; his nieces and nephews, Alexandra, Francesca,
8 Anthony, Mickinzie, Alexander, Alyse, Garrit, Emmitt, and
9 Wyitt; and his nephew and godson, Ayden; therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL
11 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
12 Thomas A. "Tom" Hernandez and extend our sincere condolences
13 to his family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be
14 it further

15 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
16 presented to the family of Tom Hernandez as an expression of
17 our deepest sympathy.