



SR1057

LRB103 40938 ECR 73969 r

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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 Galen L. Gockel of Oak Park, who passed away on January 21, 2024 at the age of 91; and

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WHEREAS, Galen Gockel was born in the City of Anna to Herman and Mildred Gockel; he earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Valparaiso in 1953; that same year, he joined the U.S. Navy, serving as a naval officer aboard the USS Rochester and teaching fleet air defense in San Diego; and

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WHEREAS, Galen Gockel met his wife, Marge, in San Diego, where she taught junior high school students; they married soon after and moved to Chicago; and

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WHEREAS, Galen Gockel received a Master of Arts in Social Work and a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Chicago in 1971; during his time at the university, he served as a field director for the National Opinion Research Center, analyzing data of a national study of racially integrated neighborhoods; and

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WHEREAS, Galen Gockel was active in the civil rights movement while in graduate school, participating in the Freedom Summer project of 1964, which sought to register

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1 African Americans in the south to vote; during his training in
2 non-violent resistance, he collaborated with civil rights
3 icons, including Bayard Rustin and Fannie Lou Hamer; and

4 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel was committed to racial justice, and
5 he and his wife acted as "straw buyers" for a Black family
6 after that family experienced discrimination from local
7 realtors in their efforts to purchase homes in the Village of
8 Oak Park; and

9 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel moved from Chicago's south side to
10 Oak Park with his wife in 1969; they purchased a house on
11 Lombard Ave, a location that would later become the home to the
12 new Oak Park Village Hall; and

13 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel joined the Associated Colleges of
14 the Midwest in 1969, serving as a faculty member and later as
15 the director of the Urban Studies Program; he retired in 1995,
16 after helping build a program that taught 65 students each
17 semester about the challenges and triumphs of urban America;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel was elected to the District 97
20 School Board in 1971; he and fellow community members formed
21 the Committee for Tomorrow's Schools and devised a plan to
22 encourage the integration of Oak Park schools by redrawing

1 boundaries and creating two junior high schools, now Gwendolyn
2 Brooks Middle School and Percy Julian Middle School; and

3 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel helped establish pillars of the Oak
4 Park community; he partnered with his wife and founded the Oak
5 Park Farmer's Market in 1976 to provide fresh and local
6 produce to Oak Park residents, and they helped fund the
7 Wednesday Journal community newspaper in 1980; and

8 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel was elected a township assessor in
9 1993, serving in that role until 2001; he fostered positive
10 relationships with members of the Oak Park Township Committee
11 and served as a mentor to Ali ElSaffar, who succeeded him and
12 presently serves in the role; and

13 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel was elected to the Village Board of
14 Oak Park in 2001, serving as a village trustee and becoming one
15 of the few people in the history of Oak Park to be elected to
16 three government positions; he served one term on the Village
17 Board and was later asked to return to fill a vacancy in 2006;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel engaged with the community outside
20 of his government roles; he was asked to join the board of the
21 Festival Theater in 2002; though reluctant at first, he
22 ultimately joined and later became the CEO; he is honored for

1 his role at the Festival Theater through the Galen Gockel
2 Internship Fund, which provides stipends to theater students
3 participating in the Festival Theater summer program; he was
4 also awarded a Community Service Award by the Park District of
5 Oak Park for his work with the Festival Theater; and

6 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel continued his contributions to his
7 community after his retirement, serving as a chairperson for
8 other Oak Park organizations, including the Unity Temple
9 Concert Series and the Senior Citizens Center; and

10 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel, whose wise input and ideas were
11 valued and sought, was a good friend, neighbor, and counsel to
12 many, including Illinois Senate President Don Harmon, a
13 lifelong Oak Park resident; in his later years, he helped host
14 an annual Town Hall Meeting with Senator Harmon for residents
15 of his Brookdale living facility, known as Brookdale
16 University, and this event became a highlight of the year for
17 Senator Harmon as much as for the attendees and Brookdale
18 audience; and

19 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel was recognized as a model of good
20 citizenry; he was quick to listen and collaborate; he rarely
21 took credit for his accomplishments and instead heaped praise
22 upon others; he was thoughtful and considerate though he
23 always spoke his mind; his commitment to equity and

1 community-building have indelibly shaped the spirit of Oak
2 Park; and

3 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel was preceded in death by his
4 parents; his wife; his sister, Greta Ann Heinemeier; and his
5 son, Timothy J. Gockel; and

6 WHEREAS, Galen Gockel is survived by his children, Andrew
7 Gockel and Rebecca Kutak; eight grandchildren; and three
8 great-grandchildren; therefore, be it

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

14 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
15 presented to the family of Galen Gockel as an expression of our
16 deepest sympathy.