



SR1209

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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 John Polka of River Forest, who passed away on January 27, 2024 at the age of 81; and

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WHEREAS, John Polka was born to George and Susan (Dillon) Polka in Chicago on July 23, 1942; and

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WHEREAS, John Polka attended Brother Rice High School and then attended St. Mary's University and Chicago State University, where he earned his master's degree; and

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WHEREAS, John Polka spent his career of over fifty years teaching biology at Fenwick High School and was the chair of the science department, where he developed the ecology of the rainforest and marine biology programs, as well as organized student science trips abroad; and

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WHEREAS, John Polka was recognized by the National Association of Biology Teachers for his efforts; and

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WHEREAS, John Polka also created Fenwick's cross-country team in 1966 and led six teams to Chicago Catholic League (CCL) titles over his 43 years of coaching; and

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1 WHEREAS, John Polka was inducted into the CCL Coaches Hall
2 of Fame and the Illinois Track and Cross Country Coaches
3 Association Hall of Fame; he served as an Illinois High School
4 Association rules interpreter and official; and

5 WHEREAS, John Polka served as a consultant to the AP
6 Biology College Board and volunteered as a tour guide at the
7 Shedd Aquarium after retiring from Fenwick; and

8 WHEREAS, John Polka was extremely involved in faculty
9 leadership; he strongly supported making Fenwick
10 co-educational and was in a group of department chairs in
11 favor of the switch; and

12 WHEREAS, John Polka will be remembered as patient, caring,
13 and passionate about mentoring students; he instilled a
14 passion for the sciences in the more than five thousand
15 students that he taught; and

16 WHEREAS, John Polka was recognized by alumni and teachers
17 as one of "Fenwick's Finest", a teacher that students
18 remembered decades after graduating; and

19 WHEREAS, John Polka is survived by his niece, Nancy
20 Polka-Schneiter, and nephew, Richard (Sylwia) Polka; many
21 extended family and friends; and the numerous Fenwick alumni

1 and staff he inspired through his teaching, coaching, and
2 strong faculty leadership; therefore, be it

3 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL
4 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
5 John Polka and extend our sincere condolences to his family,
6 friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
8 presented to the family of John Polka as an expression of our
9 deepest sympathy.