



SR1289

LRB103 43242 MST 76519 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 William Noel "Billy" Lawless, who passed away on November 8, 2024; and

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WHEREAS, Billy Lawless was born on December 24, 1950; he came to the United States in 1998 from Galway, Ireland after his daughter, Amy, won a college rowing scholarship at Boston University; he eventually settled in Chicago; and

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WHEREAS, Billy Lawless was a dairy farmer in Ireland and a medal-winning rower who trained for the 1976 Olympics in Montreal before opening pubs and an inn in Galway; and

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WHEREAS, Billy Lawless considered opening a restaurant at Penn's Landing in Philadelphia when he arrived in America but changed his focus and became a real estate agent and began brokering restaurant properties; this led to him opening the Irish Oak on Clark Street, just south of Wrigley Field; he followed with The Gage in 2007 in a vintage building on South Michigan Avenue and subsequently founded the Gage Hospitality Group in Chicago, which also includes Acanto, Coda Di Volpe, and The Dawson; and

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WHEREAS, Billy Lawless's pathway sensitized him to the

1 plight of undocumented immigrants in America, especially in
2 the restaurant industry; it motivated his interest in
3 reforming immigration policy, which led to an appearance with
4 President Barack Obama in 2014, the year he and his wife, Anne,
5 became U.S. citizens; and

6 WHEREAS, Billy Lawless worked with the Illinois Coalition
7 for Immigrant & Refugee Rights in an ultimately successful
8 effort to extend driver's license privileges to undocumented
9 immigrants; and

10 WHEREAS, Billy Lawless served as an appointed emigrant
11 senator from the Republic of Ireland from 2016 to 2020, during
12 which he championed the Irish diaspora and broader immigration
13 reform; and

14 WHEREAS, Billy Lawless was a true gentleman, an
15 accomplished businessman, and a political force who made a
16 difference in Irish and American politics over many decades;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, Billy Lawless was the husband of Anne (O'Tolle)
19 Lawless; the father of Billy, Clodagh, Amy, and John Paul; the
20 father-in-law of Catherine Gilmore-Lawless, Colm Murphy,
21 Cynthia Galvan, and Julianne Bendel Lawless; the grandfather
22 of Kieran and Darragh Lawless, Jack and Gavin Murphy, Lillyana

1 and Luke Galvan Lawless, and Ellen and Eoin Lawless; the son of
2 the late Ellen and Thomas Lawless; the brother of Gerald
3 Lawless, Helen Brennan, and Mary Loughman; and the
4 brother-in-law of Neasa Lawless, the late George Xuereb
5 Brennan, Kieran Loughman, and Pat O' Toole; therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL
7 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
8 William Noel "Billy" Lawless and extend our sincere
9 condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew and loved
10 him; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
12 presented to the family of Billy Lawless as an expression of
13 our deepest sympathy.