

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 1827

A RESOLUTION in memory of Robert F. Bennett.

WHEREAS, Robert F. Bennett, the 39th governor of the state of Kansas, died October 9, 2000, at the age of 73. A great figure in Kansas politics, Governor Bennett left a long legacy of public service: Prairie Village City Councilman, 1955-57; third mayor of Prairie Village, 1957-65; Kansas State Senator, 1965-75; President of the Kansas Senate, 1973-75 and Governor of Kansas, 1975-79; and

WHEREAS, Robert F. Bennett, who was adopted while an infant, graduated from Shawnee Mission High School and earned undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Kansas. During World War II and the Korean Conflict he served in the United States Marines. As the founder of the law firm of Bennett, Lytle, Wetzler, Winn and Martin, he returned to the private practice of law with this firm upon completion of his term as governor; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of a law passed in 1972, Robert F. Bennett was the first President of the Kansas Senate to be elected by the membership of the Senate; previously the Lieutenant Governor had presided over the Senate. As President he worked closely with former House Speaker Pete McGill to close down the multitude of hospitality rooms maintained by lobbyists and to modernize and streamline the operations of the Kansas Legislature. Benchmarks of his leadership in the Senate include the shaping of a statewide school-finance formula and major comprehensive reforms in the areas of corrections, child abuse, mental health and education; and

WHEREAS, Robert F. Bennett was the first governor elected to a four-year term instead of the previous two-year term and is undoubtedly the most intellectual governor the state has had. Known as an accomplished orator, his speeches, while largely extemporaneous, attracted and kept the attention of his listeners, and his extensive vocabulary often sent reporters scurrying to their dictionaries. A master of state operations large and small, he was the first governor to preside over budget hearings personally quizzing agency heads as to the need and justification for requested items. His administration is remembered for its focus on education and transportation. He loved the business of governing. Considering the lack of confidence in public institutions during times eroded by the Vietnam War and Watergate, Governor Bennett's administration is remembered as one that established and maintained high ethical standards; and

WHEREAS, Upon his return to private life, Governor Bennett played a behind-the-scenes role in state and local politics. Eschewing the economic benefits of lobbying, he gave freely of his time and skills to public service. He served as cochairman of the Kansas Citizens Justice Institute, an 18-month study of the Kansas court system, and headed the Governor's Property Tax Review Commission studying the merits of the state's tax system. In addition to being honored by many of the civic and fraternal organizations to which he belonged, he also was named Kansan of the Year, received the Distinguished Service Citation from the University of Kansas, the Kansas Supreme Court Justice Award and was named the Distinguished Statesman by the Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas; and

WHEREAS, Robert F. Bennett was a person who lived life fully. An early riser, he frequently completed what would be a full day's work for many by lunchtime. Lunches were times to socialize and to eat heartily. Although lunch associates were varied many knew of his preference for things fried, and served with gravy, his enjoyment of the "whitest, driest, coldest" wine available and his aversion to green vegetables; and

WHEREAS, Robert F. Bennett is survived by his wife, First Lady Olivia Bennett, a son, Robert F. Bennett, Jr., daughters, Virginia Lee Hesler, Cathy K. Bennett and Patricia Ann Bennett, a stepson, John Shepard, plus 10 grandchildren: Now, therefore,

*Be it resolved by the Senate of the State of Kansas:* That we extend our deepest sympathy to the family of Robert F. Bennett; and

*Be it further resolved:* That we urge all Kansans to honor the memory of Governor Robert F. Bennett, a leader whose legacy lives on; and

*Be it further resolved:* That the Secretary of the Senate be directed to provide an enrolled copy of this resolution to Mrs. Robert F. Bennett, 9539 Ash, Prairie Village, Kansas 66207.

Senate Resolution No. 1827 was sponsored by Senators Adkins, Allen, Barnett, Barone, Brownlee, Brungardt, Clark, Corbin, Donovan, Downey, Emler, Feleciano, Gilstrap, Gooch, Goodwin, Haley, Harrington, Hensley, Huelskamp, Jackson, Jenkins, Jordan, Kerr, Lee, Lyon, Morris, O'Connor, Oleen, Praeger, Pugh, Salmans, Schmidt, Schodorf, Steineger, Taddiken, Teichman, Tyson, Umbarger, Vratil and Wagle.

I hereby certify that the above RESOLUTION originated in the SENATE, and was adopted by that body

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*President of the Senate.*

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*Secretary of the Senate.*