

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 22

Senator Shirkey offered the following concurrent resolution:

1 A concurrent resolution offered as a memorial for Shirley
2 Johnson, former member of the House of Representatives and the
3 Senate.

4 Whereas, The members of the Michigan Legislature were deeply
5 saddened to learn of the passing of Shirley Johnson. A long-serving
6 member of this legislative body, she will be remembered as a hard-
7 working legislator who did not shy away from tough jobs or issues.
8 She was a tireless public servant who worked for the betterment of
9 her constituents in Oakland County and Michiganders across the
10 state; and

11 Whereas, Shirley Johnson was a native of Chicago and moved to
12 Michigan when her husband accepted a job with Chrysler. She
13 attended Wayne State University and Oakland Community College.
14 Shirley Johnson became very engaged in her new community, both as a

1 leader and member of various organizations dealing with health,
2 education, politics, and other matters. Her community engagement
3 included being president of the Royal Oak Republican Women's Club,
4 a coordinator for the March of Dimes and Muscular Dystrophy
5 Association, and a member of the League of Women Voters and the
6 Royal Oak and Berkley parent teacher associations, among other
7 endeavors. In addition to her community service, she worked in
8 private industry. Shirley Johnson's entry into legislative service
9 started when she managed the winning campaign for State
10 Representative Dave Campbell and subsequently worked in his office.
11 Her vast experiences and civic-minded spirit prepared her well for
12 her time as a legislator; and

13 Whereas, First elected to the House of Representatives in
14 1980, Shirley Johnson's tenure in the House lasted for 18 years
15 through 1998. Shirley Johnson broke the glass ceiling when she
16 became the first woman to serve as majority vice chair of the House
17 Appropriations Committee. She served on many appropriations
18 subcommittees, including those dealing with social services,
19 health, consumer and industry issues, the judiciary, and many other
20 areas. In the House, she was also vice chair of the standing
21 Committee on Colleges and Universities and a member of the standing
22 committees on Constitutional Revision and Women's Rights, Public
23 Safety, Senior Citizens and Retirement, and Urban Affairs; and

24 Whereas, In March of 1999, Shirley Johnson won a special
25 election to the Senate and was re-elected in 2002. Dealing with the
26 budget and crafting smart, sound appropriations bills were still at
27 the forefront of Shirley Johnson's legislative career. In fact, she
28 broke ground again as the first woman to chair an appropriations
29 committee, doing so in the Senate. In addition to serving as chair

1 of the Senate Appropriations Committee, she chaired the
2 subcommittees on Career Development and Strategic Fund Agency,
3 Capital Outlay, and Transportation; was vice chair of the
4 subcommittees on General Government, Higher Education, and the
5 Department of Natural Resources; and was a member of the
6 subcommittee on Community Health. In the Senate, she also served on
7 the standing Committee on Education as vice chair; as a member of
8 the standing Committee on Families, Mental Health and Human
9 Services; and on the Legislative Council and the Senate Fiscal
10 Agency Governing Board; and

11 Whereas, Shirley Johnson was known to be an effective
12 legislator who mastered the appropriations process during difficult
13 economic times. Her diligent work and strong leadership on the
14 appropriations committees guided the wise allocation and use of
15 taxpayer dollars; and

16 Whereas, While the state budget was her specialty, Shirley
17 Johnson also worked on many other issues in her more than 25 years
18 in the Legislature. She was an early advocate for improving mental
19 health policy. Welfare and school finance reform were two of the
20 multitude of other issues in which she shepherded the passage of
21 legislation. She also sponsored a bill to allow mothers to safely
22 and legally abandon a newborn, among many other policies; and

23 Whereas, Shirley Johnson was a tremendous lawmaker, evidenced
24 by the numerous awards she received during her time in office from
25 both local and statewide organizations, including being named
26 Legislator of the Year by the Michigan Association of Community
27 Mental Health Boards, United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan, the
28 Michigan Credit Union League, and the Michigan Judges Association,
29 among others. She was honored for her great work by advocates of

1 business interests, health matters, children's rights, and other
2 issues; and

3 Whereas, Shirley Johnson's reputation is one of a fierce
4 advocate who worked across the aisle to get things done. It has
5 been said that no woman wielded more power in the history of the
6 Michigan Legislature than Shirley Johnson. In fact, only one other
7 woman has served longer in the Michigan Legislature than Shirley
8 Johnson's tenure of 25 years and 9 months; and

9 Whereas, Shirley Johnson was more than a public servant. She
10 loved her family and was proud to be called wife, mom, and grandma.
11 Moreover, Shirley Johnson's staff was also her family. Under her
12 mentorship and high expectations, many are now leaders in
13 organizations and businesses that regularly interface with the
14 Legislature. Her love also extended to the Capitol building where
15 she was known to give impromptu tours and invite strangers in to
16 see her office; and

17 Whereas, Shirley Johnson was a committed and hardworking
18 legislator who cherished her family. Upon her passing, we offer our
19 condolences to her family and friends. We hope that they may find
20 comfort in the knowledge that the community and state share in
21 their bereavement and that the legacy of Shirley Johnson's
22 contributions will long continue to enrich our state; now,
23 therefore, be it

24 Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives
25 concurring), That we offer this expression of our highest tribute
26 to honor the memory of Shirley Johnson, a member of the House of
27 Representatives from 1981 to 1998 and a member of the Senate from
28 1999 to 2006; and be it further

29 Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the

1 Johnson family as evidence of our lasting esteem for her memory.