

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

# SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 28

Session of  
2011

INTRODUCED BY COSTA, SCARNATI, PILEGGI, ALLOWAY, ARGALL, BAKER, BLAKE, BOSCOLA, BREWSTER, BROWNE, BRUBAKER, CORMAN, DINNIMAN, EARLL, EICHELBERGER, ERICKSON, FARNESE, FERLO, FOLMER, FONTANA, GORDNER, GREENLEAF, HUGHES, KASUNIC, KITCHEN, LEACH, McILHINNEY, MENSCH, ORIE, PICCOLA, PIPPY, RAFFERTY, ROBBINS, SMUCKER, SOLOBAY, STACK, TARTAGLIONE, TOMLINSON, VANCE, VOGEL, WARD, WASHINGTON, WAUGH, D. WHITE, M. WHITE, WILLIAMS, WOZNIAK, YAW AND YUDICHAK, FEBRUARY 8, 2011

INTRODUCED AND ADOPTED, FEBRUARY 8, 2011

## A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring the life of Senator Michael A. O'Pake and extending  
2 condolences to his family, staff, constituents and many  
3 friends.

4 WHEREAS, Senator Michael A. O'Pake dedicated his life to  
5 public service and helping others and, at the time of his  
6 passing on December 27, 2010, was the longest-serving member of  
7 the Pennsylvania General Assembly and is fondly remembered by  
8 his constituents in the 11th Senatorial District as "the  
9 People's Senator"; and

10 WHEREAS, Senator O'Pake, who grew up in poverty in the  
11 Glenside housing project in Reading, Berks County, gave voice to  
12 ordinary, hard-working citizens struggling to build a better  
13 tomorrow for their families and was always a champion for  
14 children, seniors, the disabled and all of society's vulnerable  
15 and less fortunate throughout his 42 years of distinguished

1 service in the Senate and House of Representatives; and

2 WHEREAS, Senator O'Pake was valedictorian of the class of  
3 1957 at his beloved Reading Central Catholic High School, where  
4 he won the national Optimist International Oratory contest,  
5 worked his way through college and law school with the help of  
6 academic scholarships, graduated summa cum laude from St.  
7 Joseph's University in 1961 and earned his Juris Doctorate from  
8 the University of Pennsylvania School of Law in 1964, where he  
9 received the Keedy Cup for best appellate advocacy; and

10 WHEREAS, Senator O'Pake, while a member of the House of  
11 Representatives, took up the fight to help seniors with the 1971  
12 passage of the law that created the Pennsylvania State Lottery,  
13 after his election to the Senate in 1972, chaired a special  
14 Senate committee to tackle problems pertaining to Pennsylvania's  
15 youth and, in 1975, was named the first chairman of the  
16 Committee on Aging and Youth of the Senate; and

17 WHEREAS, To safeguard children from abuse and neglect and to  
18 assist the elderly, Senator O'Pake wrote Pennsylvania's 1975  
19 Child Protective Services Law and in 1978, authored the  
20 legislation creating Pennsylvania's cabinet-level Department of  
21 Aging and system of county Offices of Aging to serve the  
22 multiple needs of Pennsylvania's older adult population; and

23 WHEREAS, Senator O'Pake successfully fought for property tax  
24 and rent rebates for seniors, PACE and PACENET prescription  
25 assistance for the elderly long before the Federal Government  
26 added a prescription benefit to Medicare and was a leading  
27 advocate of Pennsylvania's landmark Children's Health Insurance  
28 Program (CHIP), which became a model for the nation; and

29 WHEREAS, Senator O'Pake sponsored or played a critical role  
30 in the passage of many laws, including establishing the powers

1 and duties of an elected Attorney General, the creation of  
2 programs and funding to ensure a quality education for all  
3 Pennsylvania students, the enactment of Pennsylvania's no-fault  
4 divorce law, juvenile justice reform to remove youthful  
5 offenders from adult prisons, the reenactment of Pennsylvania's  
6 death penalty law to meet United States Supreme Court  
7 objections, the Amber Alert System to enlist the public's help  
8 in locating abducted children and, most recently, the creation  
9 of the Missing Endangered Person Advisory Law to aid in the  
10 location of missing Alzheimer's sufferers and other vulnerable  
11 citizens; and

12 WHEREAS, Senator O'Pake strongly believed in the importance  
13 of encouraging Pennsylvanians to actively engage with their  
14 government and practice good citizenship in the historic  
15 tradition of neighbor helping neighbor and authored the law that  
16 created PennSERVE, a permanent office of citizen service in  
17 State government; and

18 WHEREAS, The recipient of awards and commendations too  
19 numerous to mention, Senator O'Pake recently was re-elected by  
20 his colleagues to the leadership position of Senate Democratic  
21 Whip, always using the positions of leadership and influence he  
22 had attained for the benefit of the people of this Commonwealth  
23 and especially for the residents of Berks County who had  
24 entrusted him with an overwhelming and unprecedented vote of  
25 confidence spanning five decades; and

26 WHEREAS, Senator O'Pake, just prior to his untimely passing,  
27 humbly accepted one last award on November 5, 2010, that,  
28 perhaps, meant more to him than any other - the prestigious  
29 Shield of Loyola award from his alma mater, St. Joseph's  
30 University, which recognized Senator O'Pake's lifetime of

1 service to others; and

2 WHEREAS, Senator O'Pake accepted the award with this  
3 challenging query: "I hope tonight and tomorrow when we all look  
4 back, we can answer this question in the affirmative: 'Has my  
5 life made a difference for good in the lives of others?';  
6 therefore be it

7 RESOLVED, That the Senate memorialize and pay tribute to an  
8 exemplary Pennsylvania public servant, and answer the question  
9 with a resounding "Yes," our departed colleague and good friend,  
10 the Honorable Michael A. O'Pake indeed made a difference for  
11 good in the lives of all Pennsylvanians and will be sorely  
12 missed; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That the Senate express its profound sorrow over  
14 the passing of Senator Michael A. O'Pake and extend its  
15 heartfelt condolences to his family, staff, constituents and  
16 many friends.