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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 Melvin J. "Mel" Wilson of Oak Park, who passed away on April 20, 2017, at the age of 74; and

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WHEREAS, Mel Wilson was born in Wichita, Kansas to Leonard Lee and Levina Wilson on July 9, 1942; he later moved to California; he studied at the Illinois Institute of Technology, where he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture in 1965; upon graduation, he served in the Peace Corps in Tunisia from 1965-1968; and

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WHEREAS, Mel Wilson moved to Oak Park, Illinois with his then-wife, Esther Parada, and their son, Adam, in 1977; and

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WHEREAS, Mel Wilson worked at the Chicago architecture firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and at the office of famed modernist architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe; he worked with Fuilawa Conterato Lohan Associates until 1984; he also worked at the Windy City Times as a proofreader, typesetter, and writer; he later taught at the Illinois Institute of Technology and at the Art Institute of Chicago; and

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WHEREAS, Mel Wilson met Nathan Linsk, a University of Illinois at Chicago Professor of Social Work, at a meeting of

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1 the Chicago Gay and Married Men's Association in 1983; both had  
2 recently come out; shortly after, Mel and Nathan became life  
3 partners; they married with great joy in Washington D.C. in  
4 2010; and

5 WHEREAS, Mel Wilson, along with Nathan Linsk and the late  
6 Bryan Findlay, founded the Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay  
7 Association (OPALGA), a community advocacy group, in 1989; the  
8 founding meeting was also attended by Rebekah Levin, who was  
9 heavily involved with Lavender Banquet, a social support group  
10 for area lesbians; he and Rebekah Levin then teamed as  
11 co-chairs of OPALGA to reach out to government groups, the  
12 police department, and community organizations; they worked to  
13 get candidates in local municipal elections to declare  
14 positions on gay and lesbian issues; he successfully lobbied  
15 the Village of Oak Park to include anti-discriminatory language  
16 into its Human Rights Ordinance and also urged the Village  
17 Board to create a Domestic Partnership Registry for same-sex  
18 couples; and

19 WHEREAS, Mel Wilson chaired the Parent Human Relations  
20 Committee at Oak Park and River Forest High School, where his  
21 son was a student; he also served on the Oak Park Design  
22 Commission and was a board member at Community Response, a  
23 local AIDS organization; and

1           WHEREAS, Mel Wilson was known by his friends and family to  
2 have a gentle sense of humor and the ability to contextualize  
3 his advocacy work by drawing on his own personal experiences  
4 and history; he was soft spoken, self-effacing, and placed  
5 great value on developing a committed and compassionate  
6 community; and

7           WHEREAS, Mel Wilson was preceded in death by his parents;  
8 and his brothers, Claude and Everett Wilson; and

9           WHEREAS, Mel Wilson is survived by his husband and partner  
10 of 32 years, Nathan; his son, Adam (Renee) Wilson; his  
11 stepdaughter, Charna Linsk (Angel McDonald); and his brothers,  
12 Darrel Wilson and Loren Wilson; therefore, be it

13           RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDREDTH GENERAL  
14 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of  
15 Melvin J. "Mel" Wilson and extend our sincere condolences to  
16 his family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be it  
17 further

18           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
19 presented to the family of Mel Wilson as an expression of our  
20 deepest sympathy.