



SR0832

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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate wish to congratulate Joel Jay Africk on his retirement from full-time employment as CEO of the Respiratory Health Association and commend him for his unwavering commitment to improving the health of residents of Illinois; and

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WHEREAS, Joel Africk is a native of Chicago; he graduated from Niles North High School, the University of Illinois (Urbana), and Harvard Law School; afterward, he clerked for the Honorable Judge Bernard M. Decker and became a partner in the Chicago law firm of Jenner & Block, LLP, where he represented clients in a broad range of business litigation matters from 1984 to 2001; and

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WHEREAS, Joel Africk became the CEO of the Respiratory Health Association in 2002, focusing on creating a safer and healthier environment for Illinois families; and

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WHEREAS, Joel Africk helped pass the Chicago Smoke-Free Ordinance in 2005, amending the Clean Air Act to make all places of employment 100% smoke-free in the City of Chicago; and

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WHEREAS, Joel Africk's leadership helped pass the 2007

1 Smoke-free Illinois Act, making all restaurants, bars, and
2 other workplaces in Illinois 100% smoke-free; the law is
3 considered the strongest smoke-free law in the country, as it
4 includes casinos and private clubs in its list of required
5 smoke-free venues; this policy was supported by more than 450
6 organizations and tens of thousands of advocates; and

7 WHEREAS, Joel Africk helped pass the State's first No
8 Idling Diesel Law, which limited diesel truck idling in the
9 metropolitan Chicago and metro East St. Louis areas to 10
10 minutes; following this legislation, the Respiratory Health
11 Association along with Citizen Action/Illinois formally
12 launched the Illinois Campaign to Clean Up Diesel Pollution,
13 with the aim to significantly clean up diesel pollution in the
14 State; to date, over 80 public health, community, labor, and
15 environmental organizations have endorsed the campaign; in
16 2008, he helped secure \$19.5 million in federal Congestion
17 Mitigation and Air Improvement funding to clean up diesel
18 engines in the Chicago metropolitan area, the largest amount
19 of money the committee has dedicated for diesel cleanup in
20 Chicago; and

21 WHEREAS, Joel Africk launched the first annual Living
22 Better Together COPD Conference in 2005, the largest patient
23 gathering in the U.S., and led a coalition in the development
24 of the nation's first statewide COPD plan to reduce

1 COPD-related morbidity and mortality, which improved the
2 quality of life for people in Illinois living with COPD; he
3 created the COPD Caregiver's Toolkit in 2017, which was
4 digitalized and became available nationwide on the National
5 Institute of Health website in 2023; and

6 WHEREAS, Joel Africk's effort to ensure smoke-free places
7 for Illinois residents enabled the Chicago Parks districts to
8 adopt a smoke-free park policy, covering 580 parks, 90
9 gardens, 90 museum campuses, 9 lakefront harbors, 9 skating
10 rinks, and more than 24 miles of lakefront property, becoming
11 the largest smoke-free park district in the country; the
12 Respiratory Health Association's efforts, with the help of
13 many advocates and institutions, reduced the adult smoking
14 rate in Illinois from 20.9% in 2011 to 12.1% in 2021 and the
15 statewide youth smoking rate from 12.5% in 2009 to 1.1% in
16 2021; and

17 WHEREAS, Joel Africk was passionate about raising
18 awareness and support for community events that supported the
19 mission to create smoke-free environments in Illinois; he
20 championed initiatives through creative community events,
21 propelling The Witt Hotel and The Hustle, which has raised
22 just under \$21 million over its lifetime, the Jewelry
23 Television, and Catch Your Breath fundraisers and three
24 Chicago Auto Show black-tie galas to support the Respiratory

1 Health Association and community efforts in promoting
2 Smoke-Free Illinois and patient support programs; and

3 WHEREAS, Joel Africk and the Respiratory Health
4 Association worked with Illinois Governor Pat Quinn in 2009 to
5 release a Green Construction Executive Order, which requires
6 all state-funded road construction projects, in non-attainment
7 areas, to use clean construction practices; and

8 WHEREAS, Joel Africk and the Respiratory Health
9 Association worked to pass the Climate & Equitable Jobs Act in
10 2021, which sets Illinois on the path to 100% clean energy by
11 2050 and commits millions of dollars to quickly expand
12 transportation electrification in Illinois; this law has been
13 instrumental in closing or preventing 23 coal power plant
14 operations; and

15 WHEREAS, Joel Africk was born to Diane (Lazow) and Richard
16 Africk, along with younger siblings, Michael Africk and Juli
17 Noll; he married Julie Magyar on December 17, 1989, and they
18 have three children, Jared (Kate), Megan, and Sarah Africk;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, Joel Africk looks forward to spending more time
21 with his family, traveling, and cycling in retirement;
22 therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL
2 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we congratulate Joel
3 Africk on his retirement from full-time employment as the CEO
4 of Respiratory Health, and we commend him on his many years of
5 service on behalf the residents in the State of Illinois and
6 beyond; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
8 presented to Joel Africk as a symbol of our esteem and respect.