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HOUSE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Friends of the Parks has selected Leon M. (Len) Despres to receive the 2005 lifetime achievement award for his leadership as a parks protector for nearly seven decades; and

WHEREAS, Len Despres was elected to the Chicago City Council in 1955 to represent Hyde Park as 5th ward alderman; as an alderman, he pressed for the equal distribution of park resources, programming, and tax dollars to all communities in Chicago; he fought for the preservation of park land in his beloved Jackson Park, preventing the construction of a highway through the park, which led to the adoption in 1973 of the Lakefront Protection Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, In May of 2005, his memoir, Challenging the Daley Machine: A Chicago Alderman's Memoir, was published by Northwestern University Press; the writing is a recount of his experiences as an independent alderman, a defender of civil and human rights in an era of turmoil; he faced many defeats, yet he fought on relentlessly, eventually winning one major issue after another, issues ranging from the sale of driveway permits to saving Chicago's historic buildings to fighting against racial discrimination; and

WHEREAS, He was instrumental in seeing the city's first Landmarks Preservation ordinance enacted, helping to position several of Chicago's parks as landmarks; he led the legal challenge to appeal the Chicago Plan Commission's approval of an above-ground theatre in Jackson Park; and

WHEREAS, After leaving the City Council, Len Despres continued his staunch support of the Coalition to Save the South Shore Country Club as a 60-acre lakefront park; he co-led the legal effort with Friends of the Parks to keep Soldier Field as an historic landmark; and

1           WHEREAS, He has served as a member of the Board of  
2 Directors of Friends of the Parks for over 20 years, providing  
3 invaluable assistance on countless issues that affect the  
4 Public Trust Doctrine of the State of Illinois; and

5           WHEREAS, He has been recognized for his life of service by  
6 earning the prestigious Benton Medal from the University of  
7 Chicago, the Distinguished Service Award from the Phi Beta  
8 Kappa Association of the Chicagoland Area, and last year, the  
9 Hyde Park Historical Society established the annual Marian and  
10 Leon Despres Preservation Award in their honor, and he and his  
11 wife, Marian, were the first recipients of the award;  
12 therefore, be it

13           RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
14 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
15 we congratulate Leon M. Despres on being chosen as the Friends  
16 of the Parks' 2005 recipient of the Lifetime Commitment to  
17 Parks Award, and we applaud his tireless efforts to improve and  
18 preserve Chicago's lakefront and neighborhood parks; and be it  
19 further

20           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
21 presented to the Honorable Leon M. Despres as an expression of  
22 our esteem.