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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 Joe Irvin Conover of Quincy, who passed away on March 22, 2026; and

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WHEREAS, Joe Conover was born in Quincy to Glenn Argus and Elsie May Bolt Conover on November 7, 1935; he attended elementary schools in Lima and Tioga and graduated from Unity High School in Mendon in 1953, where he had studied piano; he was a piano major at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music before graduating from the University of Illinois with a bachelor's degree in journalism; and

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WHEREAS, Joe Conover worked briefly at a Montana weekly newspaper and then served in the U.S. Army as an enlisted information specialist from October 1958 to February 1962; he was honorably discharged and worked in Tokyo at the copy desk of the Japan Times from February 1962 through August 1965; he taught conversational English at Kyoritsu Women's University and played guitar in a folk group called The Gallihooters; he returned to the United States in September 1965 by traveling from Japan by ship through the Soviet Union, on the Soviet airline Aeroflot, and the Trans-Siberian Railway, which included spending several days in Moscow before moving through several Scandinavian countries before returning home; and

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1 WHEREAS, Joe Conover was employed in the Herald-Whig
2 newsroom in 1966, where he met his wife, Janet Joann Gates;
3 they were married on May 28, 1967 in the United Methodist
4 Church and moved to Washington, D.C., where he edited radio
5 news copy in the Far East Division of the Voice of America,
6 then a part of the U.S. Information Agency; and

7 WHEREAS, Joe Conover and his wife returned to Quincy in
8 May 1968, and he rejoined the Herald-Whig newsroom; he retired
9 on May 1, 2001 after 33 years with the newspaper and 18 years
10 as its editor; and

11 WHEREAS, Joe Conover was a member of the Unitarian Church
12 of Quincy, and he served on the boards of various civic and
13 cultural organizations, including the Quincy Highway
14 Committee, the Quincy Public Library, the United Way of Adams
15 County, the Quincy Symphony Orchestra Association, the Quincy
16 Civic Music Association, and the Quincy Little Theatre; he and
17 his wife co-chaired a volunteer group from 2000 to 2001 that
18 raised \$400,000 for a new Indian Mounds; and

19 WHEREAS, Joe Conover was a founding member of the New
20 Philadelphia Association, and after retiring, he remained
21 involved for several years with the association; during his
22 retirement, he was also involved with the Quincy Sister City

1 Commission, Friends of the Dr. Richard Eells House, the Quincy
2 Parks Foundation, Citizens Advocating Racial Equality (CARE),
3 Quincy Teen Reach, the Quincy Drum Circle and was a two-term
4 public member of the Illinois State Board of Pharmacy; and

5 WHEREAS, Joe Conover's retirement included printmaking,
6 collage, and abstract painting in hot and cold wax, and he
7 conducted workshops in his studio; he was a member of Gallery
8 310, a co-operative gallery in Hannibal, Missouri, and his
9 work was shown in Quincy and Tri-State area exhibits and in
10 exhibits in Alabama, Connecticut, Iowa, New Mexico, and Sofia,
11 Bulgaria; the Quincy Art Center honored him with a "Joe
12 Conover Retrospective" exhibit during September and October of
13 2025 that showcased his mixed media and encaustic paintings;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, Joe Conover built two Hubbard harpsichords and
16 recently donated his two-manual harpsichord to the John Wood
17 Community College Foundation; a John Wood Community College
18 Joe Conover Harpsichord/Fine Arts Fund was established in his
19 honor to provide scholarships for harpsichord students, to
20 maintain harpsichords, and for recitals and programs; and

21 WHEREAS, Joe Conover was preceded in death by his parents;
22 his parents-in-law, Parker and Mildred Gates; his

1 brother-in-law, William F. Gerdes III; his sisters-in-law,
2 Barbara Gates Gerdes and Mary Gates; and his nephew, Parker
3 "Chip" Gerdes; and

4 WHEREAS, Joe Conover is survived by his wife of 58 years,
5 Janet; his son, Joseph Gates Conover; his son, Robert Smith
6 Conover (John Patrick Nord); his brothers, Leigh (Jane) Carter
7 Conover and Phillip Glenn (Bonnie) Conover; his sister, Ruth
8 Ellen (Richard) Conover Spohr; her nieces, Megan (Andy)
9 Conover Kroeger, Erin (Steve) Conover Milosevich, Anne (Scott)
10 Conover Alford, Beth (Kevin) Spohr Groves, Julie (Brian) Spohr
11 van Ommeren, Laura (Rick) Gerdes Ehrhart, Elizabeth (Kevin)
12 Forbes, and Anne Forbes; her nephews, Eric Conover, Mark
13 (Wendy) Conover, and William F. Gerdes IV; numerous
14 great-nieces, great-nephews, and cousins; and her friends,
15 Michael Vera Eastmond, Nick Sorrill, and Zach Meyer;
16 therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL
18 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
19 Joe Irvin Conover and extend our sincere condolences to his
20 family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be it
21 further

22 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
23 presented to the family of Joe Conover as a symbol of our

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1 deepest sympathy.