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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 retired Professor Adriaan Jan de Witte of Urbana, who passed away on January 19, 2022; and

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WHEREAS, Professor de Witte was born to Leendert and Elizabeth de Witte in Bergen op Zoom, the Province of Brabant, Netherlands on January 16, 1924; as a young student, he was required to declare allegiance to Hitler's Reich during the German occupation of the Netherlands in World War II; he refused, choosing instead to flee the Nazi regime to join Dutch pacifist war resisters in the Pyrenees Mountains of Spain; he was captured by the Gestapo while attempting to exit Vichy France and imprisoned in a French provincial jail before being shipped by railway to work in a German concentration camp; he escaped and traversed eastern Europe on foot to the coast of France; he was transported by boat to England, where he joined Dutch volunteers in the British Army and served as a medic for the rest of the war; and

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WHEREAS, Professor de Witte received honors in Mathematics and Physics from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands in 1946; he earned his master's degrees in both Mathematics and Physics from the University of Leiden in 1948; he married Maria E. Boom on November 11, 1948; and

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1           WHEREAS, Professor de Witte first embarked for work in the  
2 oil business to Indonesia; while he was fascinated by the  
3 natural world of the tropics, he was repulsed by the human  
4 misery and conditions of colonial rule; alongside his wife and  
5 daughter Bette, he emigrated to the United States in 1951; he  
6 then held a series of research scientist roles, working at  
7 Shell Oil in Houston, Texas in 1951, Conoco Oil in Ponca City,  
8 Oklahoma from 1952 to 1955, and at the headquarters of Gulf Oil  
9 in Harmarville, Pennsylvania from 1955 to 1960; he left the  
10 corporate oil industry in pursuit of academic freedom; and

11           WHEREAS, Professor de Witte became a full professor in the  
12 Department of Mining, Metallurgy & Petroleum Engineering at  
13 the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) when he  
14 was 36 years old; he taught UIUC's first class on world mineral  
15 economics; he also spent five successive summers as a visiting  
16 scholar at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Falmouth,  
17 Massachusetts; he retired in 1987; and

18           WHEREAS, Professor de Witte was a keen learner and a free  
19 thinker; he was raised in the Calvinist tradition; he was  
20 fluent in many languages, including English, Dutch, French,  
21 German, Spanish, and Latin, with a passing familiarity of  
22 Greek and Gaelic; he loved American idioms; he was an avid  
23 classical music listener and an arts aficionado; he was a

1 lifelong birdwatcher, and he participated in the Audubon  
2 Society's annual bird count and camped in Allerton Park to  
3 count owls; and

4 WHEREAS, Above all, Professor de Witte was an activist; he  
5 supported the civil rights movement in the early 1960s and  
6 held a weekly silent vigil against the Vietnam War along with a  
7 handful of fellow protestors in front of the Alma Mater statue  
8 on the UIUC campus as early as 1965; he remained adamantly  
9 opposed to all future wars and was a pacifist his entire life;  
10 and

11 WHEREAS, After retirement, Professor de Witte spent many  
12 summers with family in Nova Scotia, where he passionately  
13 photographed the "green flash" over the ocean at sunset; he  
14 was a naturalist and soon became a preservationist, purchasing  
15 25 acres of woodlands in Cape Breton and deeding them to be  
16 kept forested in perpetuity; he acquired a 150-year-old Cape  
17 Cod-style cottage and had it designated a Provincial Heritage  
18 Property, outfitting it exclusively with antiques mostly from  
19 central Illinois; he also collected and fixed antique clocks;  
20 and

21 WHEREAS, Professor de Witte was affectionately known as  
22 "Papa" to his children and "Opa" to his grandchildren; and

1           WHEREAS, Professor de Witte was preceded in death by his  
2 wife of 70 years, Maria; his parents; his sister, Janny Roest;  
3 and his brothers, Rinus and Leendert de Witte; and

4           WHEREAS, Professor de Witte is survived by his children,  
5 Bette Leach (Bob), Maarten (Jill), and Beverly Ann Fraser-de  
6 Witte; his grandsons, Jesse Fraser (Lindsay McDonald), Seth  
7 Fraser (Erin McKenzie), and Skylar Denny de Witte; and his  
8 great-grandchildren, Ewan McDonald-Fraser, William  
9 McDonald-Fraser, and Thoreau McKenzie-Fraser; therefore, be it

10           RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL  
11 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of  
12 retired Professor Adriaan Jan de Witte and extend our sincere  
13 condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew and loved  
14 him; and be it further

15           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
16 presented to the family of Professor de Witte as an expression  
17 of our deepest sympathy.