



HR0652

LRB103 39837 MST 70522 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

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

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

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

1 WHEREAS, Joel Africk's leadership helped pass the 2007
2 Smoke-free Illinois Act, making all restaurants, bars, and
3 other workplaces in Illinois 100% smoke-free; the law is
4 considered the strongest smoke-free law in the country, as it
5 includes casinos and private clubs in its list of required
6 smoke-free venues; this policy was supported by more than 450
7 organizations and tens of thousands of advocates; and

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

22 WHEREAS, Joel Africk launched the first annual Living
23 Better Together COPD Conference in 2005, the largest patient
24 gathering in the U.S., and led a coalition in the development

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

7 WHEREAS, Joel Africk's effort to ensure smoke-free places
8 for Illinois residents enabled the Chicago Parks districts to
9 adopt a smoke-free park policy, covering 580 parks, 90
10 gardens, 90 museum campuses, 9 lakefront harbors, 9 skating
11 rinks, and more than 24 miles of lakefront property, becoming
12 the largest smoke-free park district in the country; the
13 Respiratory Health Association's efforts, with the help of
14 many advocates and institutions, reduced the adult smoking
15 rate in Illinois from 20.9% in 2011 to 12.1% in 2021 and the
16 statewide youth smoking rate from 12.5% in 2009 to 1.1% in
17 2021; and

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

1 Chicago Auto Show black-tie galas to support the Respiratory
2 Health Association and community efforts in promoting
3 Smoke-Free Illinois and patient support programs; and

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

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

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

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

1 therefore, be it

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

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