



HR0476

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Elizabeth Ford, who passed away at the age of 93 on July 8, 2011; and

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WHEREAS, Elizabeth Bloomer was born on April 8, 1918, in Chicago; she was raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she displayed an early talent for dance and began to study seriously at the age of 14; her progress was such that, by the age of 20, she was offered tuition by the choreographer Martha Graham in New York, joined her teacher's auxiliary company for performances at Carnegie Hall, and worked as a fashion model to earn extra cash; she later moved back to the Michigan area at her mother's request; and

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WHEREAS, Within a year, Elizabeth Bloomer had married an old school sweetheart and left home, though the marriage was soon ended by mutual consent; in 1948, she married Gerald Ford, a lawyer fresh out of the wartime Navy and just embarking on his political career in the United States House of Representatives; the couple would be married for 58 years, until his death in December of 2006; and

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WHEREAS, In 1973, as Mrs. Ford was happily anticipating her husband's retirement from politics, Vice President Spiro T.

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1 Agnew was forced out of office over bribery charges, which led
2 President Richard Nixon to turn to Gerald Ford to fill the
3 office; Less than a year later, on August 9, 1974, Gerald Ford
4 was sworn in as the only chief executive in American history
5 who had not been elected either president or vice president;
6 Mrs. Ford wrote of her sudden ascent to First Lady: "It was
7 like going to a party you're terrified of, and finding out to
8 your amazement that you're having a good time"; and

9 WHEREAS, Betty Ford was 56 when she moved into the White
10 House, and looked more matronly than modern; ever gracious, she
11 tended to speak softly and slowly, even when taking a feminist
12 stand; she used her newfound influence as the First Lady to
13 lobby aggressively to speak against child abuse, raise money
14 for handicapped children, espouse the rights of girls and
15 women, and support the performing arts; and

16 WHEREAS, As a leader and advocate for the rights of women,
17 Betty Ford won high praise for her courageous support of breast
18 cancer awareness following her 1974 mastectomy; after the Fords
19 left the White House in January of 1977, she also raised
20 awareness of addiction problems with her announcement of her
21 long-running battle with alcoholism and drug addiction; and

22 WHEREAS, Betty Ford used the unvarnished story of her own
23 descent and recovery to crusade for better addiction treatment,

1 especially for women; she was a co-founder of the non-profit
2 Betty Ford Center, located near the Fords' home in Rancho
3 Mirage, California, in 1982; she raised millions of dollars for
4 the center, kept close watch over its operations, and regularly
5 welcomed groups of new patients; she was also a recipient of
6 the Congressional Gold Medal (co-presentation with her
7 husband, Gerald R. Ford, on October 21, 1998) and the
8 Presidential Medal of Freedom (alone, presented in 1991 by
9 President George H.W. Bush); and

10 WHEREAS, Betty Ford is survived by her children, Michael,
11 John, Steven, and Susan Ford, and her many grandchildren and
12 great-grandchildren; therefore, be it

13 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
14 NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
15 we mourn, along with her family and friends, the passing of
16 former First Lady Elizabeth Ford; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
18 presented to the family of Betty Ford as a symbol of our
19 sincere sympathy and respect for her service in the White House
20 and as a private citizen.