SENATE RESOLUTION

8702

By Senator Schoesler

WHEREAS, John Spellman, born in Seattle in 1926, left high school during World War II to enroll in the Merchant Marine Cadet Program, which led to wartime service in the U.S. Navy, and a ticket to college through the GI Bill; and

WHEREAS, John Spellman graduated from Seattle University as valedictorian of the class of 1949 and followed his college with priesthood study in a Jesuit seminary before changing to the study of the law at Georgetown University; and

WHEREAS, In 1954, after returning to Seattle, he married Lois Murphy, whom he had known since a Spanish class at Seattle University and who was the only woman in the class of 1949 to major in labor relations; and

WHEREAS, Lois Spellman was described as being both fiercely protective of her family and one of the most welcoming and kind persons that one could meet, with a very strong interest in politics that quickly led her to become her husband's greatest advisor and debate opponent; and

WHEREAS, While practicing maritime and labor law, John Spellman also became a political reformer, working with other King County Republicans to promote civil rights, environmental stewardship, and modern government; and

WHEREAS, John Spellman was elected to the King County Commission in 1966 and played a key role in establishing the county's new government structure under the Home Rule Charter of 1968, then was elected as the first executive of King County in 1969; and

WHEREAS, As executive, John Spellman worked to clean up King County government through reforms to prevent nepotism, patronage, and other corruption, and standing for racial and gender equality, criminal justice reforms, land use planning, environmental protection, and historic preservation; and

WHEREAS, John Spellman led King County through the aerospace industry crisis and high unemployment of the early 1970s and later the push to support big-league sports in Seattle through the building of the Kingdome and pursuit of sports franchises; and

WHEREAS, In 1980, John Spellman was elected the eighteenth governor of Washington, carrying thirty-two of the state's thirty-nine counties and becoming the only county commissioner to ever become governor; and

WHEREAS, Upon taking office, Governor Spellman immediately inherited a huge revenue deficit, yet upheld his commitment to support public schools, with basic education receiving more than half of the spending in his first biennium budget, setting a standard that was not reached again until the 2017-2019 operating budget; and

WHEREAS, John Spellman's many achievements during his governorship ranged from his defense of Puget Sound against a proposed underwater oil pipeline and efforts to promote job creation in distressed counties, to the creation of the state Housing Finance Commission and the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises; and

WHEREAS, First Lady Lois Spellman's commitment to her husband and their six children remained steady and sturdy from their "I Do" through the governor's mansion and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Spellman insisted that the Legislature designate employees of the governor's mansion as state employees with health care and pension benefits, worked to display art by local Northwest painters and artists, and hosted receptions honoring such artists as Kenneth Callahan, Fay Jones, and Elton Bennett; and

WHEREAS, The Spellmans' work to protect and better Puget Sound represented a profile in courage;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington State Senate honor the life and service of Governor John Spellman and First Lady Lois Spellman and recognize their dedication to civility, community, and the great state of Washington.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be immediately transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the Spellmans' children Margo, Bart, David, Jeffrey, Teresa, and Kat.