

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 2025-4634, by Representatives Lekanoff, Stearns, Wylie, Timmons, Bronoske, Leavitt, Pollet, Ryu, Thomas, Mena, Rule, Zahn, Taylor, Goodman, Reeves, Cortes, Ortiz-Self, Duerr, Salahuddin, Parshley, Obras, Fosse, Doglio, Santos, Bernbaum, Nance, Thai, Barkis, Jinkins, Fey, Paul, Macri, and Dent

1 WHEREAS, In memory of what would have been Billy Frank Jr.'s 94th
2 birthday, we honor a man whose steadfast beliefs and actions led to
3 the reaffirmation of treaty rights across the land. Known as an
4 architect of consensus solutions, he brought people together with
5 genuine respect endeavoring to find resolution for the good of all
6 people in order to protect and cultivate salmon and their natural
7 surroundings; and

8 WHEREAS, Binding promises made by the United States acknowledged,
9 through treaties, the rights of tribes to take fish "at all usual and
10 accustomed stations," and "in common with the citizens of the
11 territory" of Washington; and

12 WHEREAS, Frank's father, Willie, and his predecessors, lived in a
13 time of abundance, with strong salmon runs and plentiful clams,
14 oysters, geoducks, wild berries, and camas roots; and

15 WHEREAS, Born on March 9, 1931, to Willie Sr. and Angeline Frank,
16 Frank Jr., a member of the Nisqually Tribe, was raised in the
17 tradition of his ancestors, with stories of the land, the river, the
18 salmon runs, and the art of preserving fish; and

19 WHEREAS, Frank grew up on six acres along the banks of the
20 Nisqually River in Thurston County. Known as Frank's Landing, the
21 property was purchased after the Nisqually people were driven from
22 their reservation during the development of the Fort Lewis Army Base
23 in 1917; and

1 WHEREAS, At the age of 14, Frank began what became a lifetime of
2 advocacy, leadership, and statesmanship. In 1945, he protested his
3 arrest by two game wardens, simply for fishing on the Nisqually River
4 near his family's property. He would spend his lifetime challenging
5 the state and nation to live up to its promises; and

6 WHEREAS, In 1952, at age 21, Frank fulfilled a dream to join the
7 Marines, proudly serving in the Marine Corps for two years as an
8 expert marksman; and

9 WHEREAS, Treaty rights were increasingly eroded during Frank's
10 lifetime through commercial and recreational fishing by nontribal
11 actors and unjust state regulations and aggressive policing of tribal
12 fishing. This, combined with expansive growth, construction, property
13 development, and pollution, further depleted the plentiful salmon and
14 other natural resources that had traditionally sustained tribal
15 people in Washington; and

16 WHEREAS, By the mid 1960's Frank's Landing was a focal point for
17 the assertion of treaty rights and tribal sovereignty. Over the next
18 decade, Washington State would raid, arrest, and campaign against the
19 fishing rights of Pacific Northwest tribes; and

20 WHEREAS, Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Frank led historic
21 "fish-ins," demonstrations, and acts of civil resistance with other
22 tribal and nontribal leaders, insisting on the treaty rights
23 guaranteed more than a century before. In defending his treaty rights
24 Frank was arrested numerous times; and

25 WHEREAS, Growing public awareness of the unjust infringement upon
26 tribal treaty fishing rights in Washington ultimately resulted in the
27 historic litigation and decision issued in *United States v.*
28 *Washington*, in which the Honorable George Boldt recognized tribal
29 treaty fishing rights as the supreme law of the land; and

30 WHEREAS, Following the Boldt decision, initial, blatant disregard
31 of the decision by state and local authorities and citizens resulted
32 in hardship and anger directed at indigenous people. Frank led with
33 humility and vision towards a better future; and

34 WHEREAS, Frank remained steadfast in his vision of thriving
35 salmon in the Nisqually River, flourishing in the Salish Sea; he
36 energized others to share his vision and urgency. He resisted
37 bitterness and confronted injustice with consensus-building by
38 bringing diverse groups of people with conflicting interests together
39 in important negotiations including the Timber, Fish, and Wildlife
40 Agreement and the Pacific Salmon Treaty; and

1 WHEREAS, For more than 30 years, Frank served as Chairman of the
2 Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, created in 1975 to support the
3 natural resource comanagement activities of the 20 treaty Indian
4 tribes in western Washington; and

5 WHEREAS, Over his lifetime Frank was honored with countless
6 additional awards for his decades-long fight for justice and
7 environmental preservation, including: The Common Cause Award for
8 Human Rights Efforts, the Albert Schweitzer Prize for
9 Humanitarianism, the American Indian Distinguished Service Award, the
10 Wallace Stegner Award, the Washington State Environmental Excellence
11 Award, and the 2015 Washington State Medal of Merit. In 2015,
12 President Barack Obama named Frank posthumously as a recipient of the
13 Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest official civilian
14 honor; and

15 WHEREAS, Billy Frank Jr. died May 5, 2014, at the age of 83.
16 Willie Frank III and his wife, Peggen, continue the work of both
17 father and grandfather. A good life growing up at Frank's Landing
18 instilled the dignity and respect that informed the principles and
19 guidelines of their leadership. His family once said, "being with
20 Billy is like floating on a steady, easy river. Billy's life is
21 turbulent, but Billy is not. He's the happiest person I know. He's
22 completely at peace with himself"; and

23 WHEREAS, A statue of Billy Frank Jr. will soon be unveiled at
24 National Statuary Hall where his likeness will represent the great
25 state of Washington in the United States Capitol building in
26 Washington, D.C.;

27 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives
28 commemorate March 9th as Billy Frank Jr. Day; and

29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we reflect in gratitude on Billy
30 Frank Jr., the man who worked tirelessly and collaboratively to
31 protect tribal treaty rights, native traditions, and the natural
32 resources they are based upon; and

33 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
34 forwarded to the family of Billy Frank Jr.

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