

2025-J791

Senate Resolution No. 791

BY: Senator HARCKHAM

MOURNING the death of Jean Van Leeuwen,
award-winning writer, loving wife, mother and
grandmother, and devoted member of her community

WHEREAS, There are certain outstanding members of our community who,
through their selfless commitment and dedication, have served to better
the quality of life in our community and have had a measurable positive
impact on the lives of its residents; Jean Van Leeuwen was one such
individual; and

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this
Legislative Body records the passing of Jean Van Leeuwen, noting the
significance of her purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Jean Van Leeuwen, a beloved and prolific author of
children's literature whose works have inspired generations of young
readers, died on March 3, 2025, at the age of 87 at her home in
Chappaqua, New York, after a battle with cancer; and

WHEREAS, Jean Van Leeuwen was born on December 26, 1937, in Glen
Ridge, New Jersey, to Cornelius, a minister, and Dorothy, a teacher, and
was raised in Rutherford, New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, Jean Van Leeuwen pursued her higher education at Syracuse
University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in magazine journalism

in 1959, laying the foundation for a long and meaningful career in writing and publishing; and

WHEREAS, Jean Van Leeuwen began her professional life as an assistant editor at TV Guide before transitioning to the world of children's literature at Abelard-Schuman, where she discovered her passion for storytelling while assisting the noted editor Frances Schwartz; and

WHEREAS, She joined Dial Press in 1970 as a senior editor and worked closely with acclaimed editor Phyllis Fogelman, during which time she continued to publish original stories that would captivate young readers for decades to come; and

WHEREAS, Following the births of her children, David and Elizabeth, Jean Van Leeuwen left her publishing position to devote herself fully to motherhood and writing, often crafting her stories during quiet moments while her children napped; and

WHEREAS, Jean Van Leeuwen's experiences as a parent directly inspired the creation of her cherished characters Oliver Pig and Amanda Pig, who first appeared in *Tales of Oliver Pig* (1979), one of the early titles in Dial's line of beginning readers, and went on to become enduring figures in children's literature; and

WHEREAS, Over the course of her career, Jean Van Leeuwen authored nearly 60 books for young readers, spanning picture books, early readers, and middle-grade novels, demonstrating remarkable versatility in both format and tone; and

WHEREAS, Among her most celebrated works is *The Great Cheese*

Conspiracy, which introduced readers to Marvin the Magnificent and his band of rodent accomplices, and which was later adapted into a Czech animated film in 1986; and

WHEREAS, Jean Van Leeuwen's books have been translated into multiple languages and have sold millions of copies worldwide, enriching the imaginations of children across the globe; and

WHEREAS, Jean Van Leeuwen married Bruce Gavril in July 1968, with whom she shared more than five decades of marriage, raising two children and later welcoming a cherished grandchild; her legacy will live on in the joy and imagination her books continue to spark in readers of all ages; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Jean Van Leeuwen, and to honor her extraordinary contributions to children's literature, extending its heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, readers, and all of those whose lives she touched through the magic of her words; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Jean Van Leeuwen.