

2009-J255

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION honoring John T. Cowin upon the occasion of his retirement as Chief of the Syracuse Fire Department

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend those illustrious individuals of distinguished purpose whose lives have been committed to the pursuit of excellence in their service to their communities; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, it is the intent of this Legislative Body to honor John T. Cowin upon the occasion of his retirement after 31 years of distinguished service to the Syracuse Fire Department, the last eight of which he served as Chief of Fire; and

WHEREAS, John Cowin was one of four children born in Schenectady, New York, to Harold and Helen Cowin, with siblings Timothy, Judy, Patricia and Elizabeth; as a child, John admired and looked up to his father, who was a personnel manager and his mother, who was a teacher; and

WHEREAS, John Cowin moved to Syracuse, New York, as a teenager and attended Central High School, where he had many close friends; and

WHEREAS, After high school, John Cowin took a job at Hendricks Photo Supply in Syracuse, and in the mid-1970s, when he was selling photo equipment, he let a friend talk him into taking the civil service exam;

John ended up passing the exam, even though his friend did not; and

WHEREAS, John Cowin, who never intended to become a firefighter, became an excellent firefighter and Chief; he joined the Syracuse Fire Department in 1977, and quickly rose through the ranks; he was promoted to Fire Lieutenant in 1987, appointed First Deputy Chief of Fire in 2000, and appointed Chief of Fire in 2001; and

WHEREAS, Although most Syracuse Fire Chiefs only serve a few years, and only remain in the position through one mayoral administration, John Cowin served as Chief for nearly eight years, and has the sixth-longest term as Chief since the department was incorporated in 1877; and

WHEREAS, As Chief, John Cowin oversaw nearly 400 firefighters, including those who were also certified first responders, paramedics and emergency medical technicians, and he was responsible for a department that

responded to over 20,000 emergency calls a year; and
WHEREAS, John Cowin was admired for his dedication to the department, demonstrated by his frequent visits to fire scenes even when he was not on duty; Chief Cowin was also a great leader and friend, and firefighters in the Syracuse Fire Department took comfort knowing that he was always behind them "110 percent"; and

WHEREAS, In 2001, John Cowin was one of six from the Syracuse Fire Department who volunteered to help in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center; through this act, he generously donated his time and energy to help out his fellow Americans; and

WHEREAS, John Cowin has served in various capacities at the Syracuse Fire Department Employees' Federal Credit Union, and has served as Chairman of the Board of Directors since 1984; and

WHEREAS, John Cowin is active in the community and serves as a community leader through his involvement in several organizations, including as board member of the American Red Cross, the Everson Museum and the Onondaga Historical Society; and

WHEREAS, John Cowin has received numerous awards and departmental accommodations for his noteworthy service, such as the Francis M. Hendrick's Medal, presented to him by the City of Syracuse in 1985; the Hamilton White Award, also presented to him in 1985; the Syracuse Fire Department Medal of Honor, which he received in 1983 for rescuing two unconscious children and again in 1988 for rescuing a Fire Captain who

had an equipment failure; the Syracuse Fire Officer's Valor Award, which was presented to him in 1996 for rescuing an unconscious female occupant of a house fire; and the New York State Senate Liberty Award, which was presented to him in 2002 for his response to Ground Zero in New York City; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor John T. Cowin upon the occasion of his retirement after many years of distinguished service to the Syracuse Fire Department, and to thank him for his dedication to the people he has served, and to acknowledge our respect, esteem, and appreciation for his outstanding service to our community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to John Cowin.