

## 2015-J236

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Bess Myerson, 1945 Miss America and renowned television personality

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to acknowledge those outstanding individuals whose professional lives and personal endeavors served as a paradigm to the people of both the Nation and this great Empire State; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is moved this day to record the passing of cherished citizen Bess Myerson who died on Sunday, December 14, 2014, at the age of 90; and

WHEREAS, Bess Myerson was born in the Bronx, New York in 1924 to immigrant parents; Bess Myerson was proud of her Russian-Jewish heritage, and her upbringing in the Sholem Aleichem Cooperative Houses in the northwest Bronx; and

WHEREAS, In 1945, at the same time the horrors of the Holocaust were being exposed to a global audience, Ms. Myerson became the first, and to date only, Jewish Miss America pageant winner; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Myerson refused pageant officials' request to change her name and she continued to face anti-Semitism throughout her travels as the Miss America Pageant winner, including the withdrawal of several pageant sponsors, yet she persevered, representing Jewish Americans proudly; and

WHEREAS, Bess Myerson used her status as Miss America to speak out against prejudice, and continued to advocate throughout her life on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League, eventually winning the Anti-Defamation League's woman of the year award in 1965; and

WHEREAS, Becoming a role model for future Miss America Pageant winners, as well as other American public figures, she parlayed her youthful celebrity status into a position of lasting influence in the

public service; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Lindsay appointed Bess Myerson as Commissioner of the New York City Consumer Affairs Agency in 1969, where she served for five years; and

WHEREAS, As Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, she fought for lasting reforms that continue to protect consumers today, including the first city regulation in the nation requiring retailers to post unit prices on a wide variety of products; sell-by dates on perishable food items; banning unlicensed auto-repair shops; and even fought against the use of baby rattles that were filled with shrapnel; and

WHEREAS, Under Ms. Myerson's leadership, the Department of Consumer Affairs successfully banned many deceptive trade practices such as "fresh" labels on frozen fish, restaurants selling hamburgers containing less than 100% beef, and companies putting too many peanuts in jars that were labeled "mixed nuts"; a record that led to her appearance on the cover of LIFE Magazine in 1971 as "A Consumer's Best Friend"; and

WHEREAS, In 1983, Mayor Koch appointed Bess Myerson as the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs; and

WHEREAS, She was appointed by three United States Presidents to serve on boards relating to several issues including crime and violence, mental health and world hunger, and workplace issues; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Myerson made a lasting contribution to New York through her involvement in several major local, state and federal political campaigns, including her support of Ed Koch as candidate for Mayor of New York City which is often credited as a major reason for his victory; Ms. Myerson also actively campaigned for Daniel Patrick Moynihan for U.S. Senate, and Hugh Carey for Governor of New York State, helping both candidates to victory; and

WHEREAS, Further demonstrating her political prowess, Ms. Myerson became a candidate for U.S. Senate in 1990, eventually falling short narrowly in the Democratic Primary; and

WHEREAS, As an author, Bess Myerson wrote books relating to Consumer Fraud and Health, and also authored a longtime column in Redbook magazine; and

WHEREAS, Having survived ovarian cancer in the 1970's, Bess Myerson offered her support and efforts to Share, an organization that provides free support and counseling to women with breast and ovarian cancer; and

WHEREAS, Like most individuals of her generation, Bess Myerson loved her country and its ideals; her compassionate commitment to these ideals and unfailing spirit will endure as an inspiration to all who had the privilege and honor of knowing her; and

WHEREAS, A legion of friends will remember her fondly for her charm, her public speaking persona, and her tireless dedication to public service; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Bess Myerson leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all she served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor the life and innumerable contributions of Bess Myerson, renowned television personality; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Bess Myerson.