

2015-J3234

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION congratulating Ruth Garner upon the occasion of celebrating her 100th Birthday

WHEREAS, Senior citizens bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the increasingly active roles they play in today's society; their past contributions and future participation are a vital part of, and valuable asset to, the fabric of community life and activity; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to congratulate Ruth Garner upon the occasion of her 100th Birthday to be celebrated on Wednesday, November 18, 2015; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Finnegan was born on November 18, 1915, in Massena, New York, one of six children of Dennis and Isabelle Dame Finnegan; at a young age, she moved with her family to Norwood, New York, where she attended local schools; and

WHEREAS, After graduating Valedictorian, Class of 1933, from Norwood High School, Ruth Finnegan entered nursing school at Champlain Valley Hospital in Plattsburgh, New York; however, she was forced to return home to take care of her ailing mother before taking her boards; and

WHEREAS, While home, Ruth Finnegan began a successful career as a manicurist and hairdresser, eventually opening her own beauty shop in Norwood which she managed for many years; and

WHEREAS, In 1939, Ruth Finnegan married her former high school classmate, George Garner, and together, they were the proud parents of six children; Ruth and George established the Gamer Funeral Home in 1945, and Ruth assumed the duties of office manager in addition to her responsibilities of being a mother and beauty shop owner; and

WHEREAS, A dedicated community leader and trailblazer for women in North Country politics, Ruth Gamer first became politically active

during the debate over a proposed bond issue for Potsdam schools, and later went on to serve as President of the PTA; and WHEREAS, Inspired by her father's saying, "Don't complain unless you have a better solution," Ruth Garner quickly became known throughout the region for her passion for civic affairs, as well as her tenacious and rambunctious spirit; during the late 1960s, she participated in walks from Potsdam to Canton, New York, to raise awareness during the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements; and

WHEREAS, In 1973, Ruth Gamer became the first woman to be elected to the Village of Potsdam Board of Trustees; six years later, she was elected Mayor and became deeply involved in such contentious issues as planning and zoning, downtown traffic, and urban renewal; and

WHEREAS, After taking time off from politics to care for members of her family, Ruth Garner returned as Mayor in 1993 for the first of four consecutive terms; during this time she continued to display a passionate commitment to improving life in her community; and

WHEREAS, With a sense of civic responsibility, Ruth Garner has remained a vital part of local government since stepping down as Mayor and Deputy Mayor; a long time member of the Village Board of Trustees, she has also been an advocate for people living with HIV/AIDS, and helped bring the AIDS Memorial Quilt to the North Country; and

WHEREAS, Ruth Garner has been called upon to contribute her time and talents to countless civic and charitable endeavors and has always given of herself unstintingly; she served as a member of the Board of Directors of the St. Lawrence County Historical Society, and was President of the Potsdam Public Library Board of Directors, as well as the Renewal House Board of Directors; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, Ruth Garner was Chairperson of the Annual New York State Local Government Conference at SUNY Potsdam, and received the university's 2014 Civic Engagement Award; and

WHEREAS, Believed to be the oldest serving elected official in New

York State, Ruth Garner was featured in a 2003 "60 Minutes" story interviewing senior citizens who remain working well past the traditional age of retirement; and

WHEREAS, This exceptional civic leader and pioneer for women in politics has inspired many through her fine example, extraordinary dedication and ardent desire to serve others; and

WHEREAS, It is the intent of this Legislative Body to publicly recognize those who have reached such a remarkable age and who have witnessed and celebrated the innovations, cultural developments and awesome achievements of this country during the last century, while themselves contributing to the growth and excellence of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to congratulate Ruth Garner upon this momentous occasion and to wish her a very happy 100th Birthday; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Ruth Garner.