

2015-K855

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION celebrating the life and exemplary career of The Honorable Judith S. Kaye, former Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, New York State's highest court

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and pay tribute to those singular individuals who devote their purposeful lives and careers in service to preserving the rights and protecting the welfare of the citizens of their community and the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, It is with feelings of deepest regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Judith Kaye, noting the significance of the loss of a woman whose passionate and altruistic spirit will be greatly missed; and

WHEREAS, Judith S. Kaye, the first female Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals died on Thursday, January 7, 2016, at the age of 77; and

WHEREAS, Born on August 4, 1938, in Monticello, New York, Judith Smith Kaye earned a bachelor's degree from Barnard College in 1958, before obtaining an LL.B from New York University School of Law, cum laude, in 1962; one year later, she was admitted to the New York State Bar; and

WHEREAS, Judith S. Kaye began her eminent career in private practice in New York City with the firm of Sullivan & Cromwell; she then moved to Olwine, Connelly, Chase, O'Donnell & Weyher, until her historic appointment by Governor Mario Cuomo to the New York State Court of Appeals on March 23, 1993, the position she would hold until December 31, 2008, after becoming the first woman to be appointed Chief Judge of the State's highest court; and

WHEREAS, A legal scholar with a keen mind, whose visionary, thoughtful prose and, above all, unfaltering belief in restorative justice and fairness, throughout her 15 years as New York State's Chief Judge resulted in a period of unprecedented reform in the administration of New York's Courts; she will be remembered for writing several notable decisions on a wide variety of statutory, constitutional, and common law issues; and

WHEREAS, Her commitment to strengthening New York's child welfare system and her steadfast belief in the importance of family preservation helped to improve the lives of countless people across the State; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of Judith S. Kaye's outstanding intellect and impeccable work ethic, she was the recipient of the 1997 Edith I. Spivack Award from the New York County Lawyers' Association's Women's Rights Committee; and

WHEREAS, Under Judith S. Kaye's leadership, New York State was considered a national leader in court reform efforts and in establishing problem-solving courts; working with the Fund for the City of New York, she helped establish the Center for Court Innovation, a non-profit think tank that, although independent of the court system, serves as the judiciary's research and development arm; and

WHEREAS, As Chief Judge, Judith S. Kaye also served as Co-Chair of the Commission on the American Jury of the American Bar Association from 2004-2005; Chair of the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children; founding member and Honorary Chair of Judges and Lawyers Breast Cancer Alert (JALBCA); member of the Board of Editors, New York State Bar Journal; and Trustee of the William Nelson Cromwell Foundation; and

WHEREAS, At the age of 70, Judith S. Kaye retired, as state law requires, but this did not end her period of public service; she was appointed to the Commission on Judicial Nomination which recommends finalists to the governor for positions on the Court of Appeals and was elected as its Chair on May 21, 2009; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her retirement, she continued to lend her voice and vision for social reform by advocating for a more comprehensive and holistic approach to the administration of justice in New York; and

WHEREAS, At the time of her death, Judith S. Kaye was serving as counsel at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom in New York City; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by her husband, Stephen Rackow Kaye, Judith S. Kaye is survived by three children, and many grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, She was truly a trailblazer for women and families, armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Judith S. Kaye's life was a portrait of service, a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all she served and befriended; she will be greatly missed by many; now,

therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life and exemplary career of The Honorable Judith S. Kaye, former Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, New York State's highest court; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Judith S. Kaye.