

2017-J619

Senate Resolution No. 619

BY: Senator BONACIC

MOURNING the death of The Honorable Benjamin A. Gilman, New York State Congressman, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to mourn publicly the death of certain prominent individuals whose valued contributions to their community and their profession served to enhance the quality of life in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, With feelings of deepest regret, this Legislative Body records the passing of one of New York State's most distinguished citizens, The Honorable Benjamin A. Gilman, who died on Saturday, December 17, 2016, at the age of 94; and

WHEREAS, Benjamin A. Gilman was born to the late Harry and Esther (Gold) Gilman on December 6, 1922, in Poughkeepsie, New York; and

WHEREAS, Shortly after graduating from Middletown High School in 1941, Benjamin A. Gilman proudly served his country as a member of the United States Army Air Corps during World War II; from 1942-1945, he flew 35 missions over Japan, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Clusters; and

WHEREAS, After his discharge, Benjamin A. Gilman earned his

bachelor's degree from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in 1946; he furthered his education by obtaining his Bachelor of Laws degree from New York Law School in 1950; and

WHEREAS, Following law school, Benjamin A. Gilman was appointed Assistant New York Attorney General, a position he held from 1953-1955; he then established a law firm in his hometown of Middletown; and

WHEREAS, Benjamin A. Gilman was a member of the New York Assembly from 1967-1972, sitting in the 177th, 178th, and 179th New York State Legislatures; in this role, he served on the Southeastern Water Commission; and

WHEREAS, In 1972, Benjamin A. Gilman was elected to his first term in the United States Congress, representing New York's 26th District; throughout his distinguished 36 year career, he served under seven presidents; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman served as a Congressional delegate to the United Nations, serving under Ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick in 1981; he was also a member of the Ukraine Famine Commission, a member of the United States, European, Canadian and Mexican Interparliamentary conferences, and a Congressional Advisor to the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman was co-Chair of the Committee on Irish Affairs and participated on the International Task Force on Narcotics, where he focused on legislation to combat illegal drugs; and

WHEREAS, During the 1970s, Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman was

instrumental in negotiating the release of several Americans imprisoned abroad by serving on the Select Congressional Committee on Prisoners of War and Missing in Action in Southeast Asia; in 1980, he negotiated with a Cuban diplomat for the release of 30 Americans imprisoned in Cuba; and

WHEREAS, Impassioned by the plight of the destitute, Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman wrote legislation creating a Presidential Commission Against Hunger, and subsequently, helped fight world hunger in the 1970s; and

WHEREAS, For his steadfast and unrelenting commitment to his constituents and all citizens of the Nation, he was a recipient of the Secretary's Distinguished Service Award, a gold medal and certificate which represents the highest civilian honor bestowed by the State Department; and

WHEREAS, From 1995-2000, Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman served as the Chairman of the International Relations Committee; in this capacity, he urged the United States to strengthen its relationship with India; and

WHEREAS, At the time of his retirement in 2003, Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman was the oldest sitting legislator in the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, After leaving Congress, Benjamin A. Gilman founded his own business in Washington D.C. specializing in international matters; from 2003-2004, he was the United States representative to the 58th session of the United National General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, On March 28, 2008, Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman was honored to participate in the opening ceremony for the Gilman Center for

International Education on the SUNY Orange campus; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his son, David and daughter, Ellen, The Honorable Benjamin A. Gilman is survived by his wife, Georgia; two sons, Jonathan (Monica) Gilman and Harrison Gilman; one daughter, Susan Gilman; a stepson, Peter (Jody) Tingus; and one stepdaughter, Nicole (Nicholas) Pappas; as well as 11 grandchildren who brought great happiness to his life; and

WHEREAS, A man of great compassion and sensitivity, Congressman Benjamin A. Gilman's legacy extends far beyond his accomplishments as a successful public servant; his sincere concern for others; his integrity, unconditional friendship and selfless motivation to give of himself, will long stand as a beacon for those who would aspire to service in their community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of The Honorable Benjamin A. Gilman, New York State Congressman, recognizing the significance of his exemplary record of public service; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of The Honorable Benjamin A. Gilman.