

2017-J3278

Senate Resolution No. 3278

BY: Senator KENNEDY

MOURNING the death of Robert G. Wilmers, legendary banking leader, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his Buffalo community

WHEREAS, It is with feelings of deepest regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Robert Wilmers, a preeminent citizen whose distinguished public service and caring commitment will long serve as standards to which others might aspire; and

WHEREAS, Robert G. Wilmers of New York City passed away on Saturday, December 16, 2017, at the age of 83; and

WHEREAS, Robert G. Wilmers will fondly be remembered as an advocate for Buffalo, New York, and an inspiring visionary; he had the uncanny ability to bring together leaders from different walks of life to push for change in the region; he truly believed that a bank can only do as well as the community it serves; and

WHEREAS, Born in New York City, Robert G. Wilmers spent his childhood in Belgium; upon his return to the United States, he attended Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire; after graduating, he earned his degree from Harvard College at Harvard University in 1956; he furthered his education by attending the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration; and

WHEREAS, Robert G. Wilmers began his distinguished banking career at Bankers Trust Corporation as the New York City Finance Commissioner under former Mayor John Lindsay; he also worked at J. P. Morgan & Co.'s Morgan Guaranty Trust Co.; and

WHEREAS, In May of 1983, Robert G. Wilmers assumed the titles of both Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of M & T Bank Corporation; in this capacity, he transformed the bank into a powerful economic force while leaving his long-lasting mark on numerous cultural institutions and public education in Western New York; and

WHEREAS, Under his luminous leadership, the bank completed 24 acquisitions, grew from 2,000 employees to nearly 17,000, expanded from 51 branches in one state to 783 branches in eight states plus the District of Columbia, and increased assets from \$2 billion to more than \$120 billion; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, Robert G. Wilmers was instrumental in making M & T Bank Corporation a financial institution which truly cared about improving public education and positively impacted the lives of millions of Western New York's young people; and

WHEREAS, Known as Buffalo's best friend, Robert G. Wilmers' commitment to excellence, and his spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

WHEREAS, A man of many passions and interests, Robert G. Wilmers will long be remembered for not only his astute business acumen, but

also for his various philanthropic endeavors and engagement with prominent arts and culture organizations in Buffalo including The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Shea's Performing Arts Center, the Buffalo

Philharmonic Orchestra, the Buffalo Zoo, and Olmstead Parks as well as the Darwin Martin House; and

WHEREAS, For his fierce determination, engaging personality and leadership style, Robert G. Wilmers was the recipient of numerous awards and accolades including the 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award by American Banker, the Charles P. Norton Medal from the University at Buffalo, and the 2008 Chevalier of the Legion of Honor by the President of France; and

WHEREAS, Robert G. Wilmers was named the 2011 Banker of the Year by American Banker, and Citizen of the Year twice by The Buffalo News; this remarkable man also received honorary degrees from Canisius College, Niagara University, and the University at Buffalo; and

WHEREAS, Robert G. Wilmers is survived by his wife, Elisabeth; his son, Christopher; four stepchildren, Camille de Wouters, Guillaume de Wouters, Juliette Chevalier, and Charlotte de Coupigny; two grandsons, and 11 step-grandchildren, as well as a legion of friends, and colleagues in the banking world he helped shape; and

WHEREAS, A devoted husband, father, stepfather, and grandfather, Robert G. Wilmers' name is synonymous with character, dignity, intellect, depth, and humor, qualities evident to his family and to all those who were fortunate enough to have known him; he will be deeply missed and truly merits the grateful tribute of this Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Robert G. Wilmers, legendary leader in the banking world, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his Buffalo community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Robert G. Wilmers.