

2017-J4977

Senate Resolution No. 4977

BY: Senator HOYLMAN

CELEBRATING the life and accomplishments of Edith Windsor, an American LGBT rights activist and technology manager for IBM

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to pay proper tribute to those cherished citizens of the State of New York whose purposeful lives exemplified the highest ideals of humanity; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is proud to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Edith Windsor, noting the significance of the loss of a woman with great intellect and an indomitable spirit; she died on Tuesday, September 12, 2017, in Manhattan, at the age of 88; and

WHEREAS, Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on June 20, 1929, Edith was the youngest of three children of James and Celia Schlain, Jewish immigrants from Russia; and

WHEREAS, Affectionately known to family and friends as Edie, Edith Windsor was the lead plaintiff in the Supreme Court of the United States case *United States v. Windsor*, which successfully overturned Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act and was considered a landmark legal victory for the same-sex marriage movement in the United States; and

WHEREAS, After excelling in high school, Edie enrolled at Temple University in 1946; she became engaged to her brother's friend, Saul Wiener, and married him after receiving her bachelor's degree in 1950; it was at this time she began using the surname Windsor; and

WHEREAS, Less than a year later, the couple divorced amicably, and Edie, keeping her married name, moved to New York; working as a secretary, she earned a master's degree in applied mathematics from New York University in 1957; and

WHEREAS, Edie Windsor also learned computer programming, working for a time on the Univac computer for the Atomic Energy Commission at N.Y.U.; she was hired by I.B.M. as a computer programmer in 1958; and

WHEREAS, In 1963, Edie Windsor met Dr. Thea Spyer, a clinical psychologist; two years later, they began dating and in 1967, Dr. Spyer proposed marriage and they began what became a 40-year engagement, sealed with a diamond brooch; and

WHEREAS, As their careers took off, they lived together in an apartment in Greenwich Village; upon returning from a trip to Italy in 1969, they learned that the Stonewall Inn uprising occurred the night before; and

WHEREAS, Due to that event, Edie Windsor felt only incredible gratitude towards those involved; this is when her life changed forever; she and Dr. Spyer marched in gay pride parades with rainbow flags, joined gay and lesbian organizations and lived openly as lesbians; and

WHEREAS, In 1975, when I.B.M. moved her group out of New York City, Edie Windsor took early retirement as a senior systems programmer and

began what she called a second career as an LGBT rights activist; and

WHEREAS, Two years later, Dr. Spyer was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis; in 1993, when New York City began a domestic partnership registry to extend housing, health insurance and other benefits to gays, lesbians and unmarried heterosexuals, Edie Windsor and Dr. Spyer were among the first to sign up; and

WHEREAS, Marriage was still the couple's hope when Dr. Spyer suffered a heart attack; with time running out, they traveled to Toronto in 2007 with six friends and were married in a ceremony officiated by Canada's first openly gay judge; it was later recognized as a valid marriage by New York State; and

WHEREAS, While speaking at a rally outside of City Hall in New York, Edie Windsor voiced to the crowd that "married is a magic word", just a couple of days before Dr. Spyer died on February 5, 2009; and

WHEREAS, Two short years later, same-sex marriage became valid in New York State in 2011; Edie Windsor's 2013 Supreme Court victory was followed by an avalanche of lawsuits attacking same-sex marriage bans in jurisdictions where they remained; and

WHEREAS, On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court made same-sex marriage a constitutional guarantee all over the land; and

WHEREAS, On September 26, 2016, Edie Windsor married Judith Kasen, a banking executive, at New York City Hall; they met at a gay-rights event and started dating in 2015; in addition to her wife, Judith Kasen-Windsor, Edith Windsor is survived by several cousins, a niece and a nephew; and

WHEREAS, Edie Windsor, whose illustrious life was spent championing for the LGBT community, truly demonstrated personal courage and determination; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay just homage to a woman whose activism and many accomplishments stand as an inspiration to others; she organized herself for the purpose of improving and enhancing the quality of life in her community, the State of New York, and the Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Edith Windsor, an American LGBT rights activist and technology manager for IBM, and to offer its sincerest condolences to her family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Judith Kasen-Windsor.