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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

H O U S E R E S O L U T I O N

**EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES TO THE SMITH FAMILY ON THE PASSING OF ROBERT
ELLIS SMITH**

Introduced By: Representatives Filippi, Shekarchi, Hull, Lyle, and Kennedy

Date Introduced: January 29, 2019

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, Robert Ellis Smith was born in Providence and educated at the Moses
2 Brown School, Harvard University, where he was the President of the Harvard Crimson student
3 newspaper, and the Georgetown University Law Center. After graduation and a period of service
4 in the United States Army, he embarked on a very successful and renowned career in journalism
5 and as an author; and

6 WHEREAS, In 1965, Mr. Smith was the founder, editor and manager of the Southern
7 Courier, a weekly newspaper based in Montgomery, Alabama, where he covered important
8 events of the civil rights movement not covered by the larger media outlets. He had the honor of
9 working with, and commissioning articles by civil rights luminaries such as Martin Luther King,
10 Jr., and Rosa Parks; and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. Smith later worked as a reporter and editor for major media entities
12 like the Detroit Free Press, the Trenton Times, and Newsday. He also worked for a period of time
13 as a civil Rights Official for the United States Government; and

14 WHEREAS, Starting in the 1970's, Mr. Smith began to believe that rapid advances in
15 technology and communication would lead to serious legal issues in the area of personal privacy.
16 In 1974, he started publishing a "Privacy Journal", a monthly newsletter he ran and operated from
17 a house in Washington, DC. In 1977, the Washington Post described his newsletter as being "the
18 most talked-about Washington newsletter since I.F. Stone's Weekly." In 1980, at its peak, his
19 newsletter had 6,000 subscribers; and

1 WHEREAS, Mr. Smith served on the District of Columbia Human Rights Commission in
2 the 1980's where he decided cases involving allegations of discrimination based on race, gender,
3 age and sexual orientation; and

4 WHEREAS, Mr. Smith was also a prodigious writer, authoring twelve books, many on
5 the subject of privacy. In 1990, he moved back to Providence where he continued to write about
6 privacy-related issues, and taught classes at Harvard, Brown University, the University of
7 Maryland, and Roger Williams Law School. He was a former Town Commissioner for Block
8 Island, where he had a vacation home; and

9 WHEREAS, Mr. Smith leaves behind his sons, Marc Smith, David Ellis Smith, and
10 Benjamin Smith, and four grandchildren. He was predeceased by his son Gregor Smith; now,
11 therefore be it

12 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
13 Providence Plantations hereby expresses its condolences to the Smith Family on the passing of
14 Robert Ellis Smith; and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
16 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to Mr. Marc Smith, Mr. David Ellis Smith, and
17 Mr. Benjamin Smith.

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