

2021 -- S 0616

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2021

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SENATE RESOLUTION

CONGRATULATING THE HONORABLE KATHLEEN CONNELL ON HER RETIREMENT  
AS THE RHODE ISLAND STATE DIRECTOR FOR THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF  
RETIRED PEOPLE (AARP) AND THANKING AND HONORING HER FOR HER MANY  
YEARS OF DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE

Introduced By: Senators DiPalma, Euer, Ruggerio, McCaffrey, Goodwin, Sosnowski,  
Felag, Picard, Seveney, and Gallo

Date Introduced: March 11, 2021

Referred To: Placed on the Senate Consent Calendar

1           WHEREAS, The Honorable Kathleen Connell was born in Newport, daughter of  
2 Lawrence and Margaret Sullivan. She graduated magna cum laude from Salve Regina University  
3 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing and later earned a Master's degree in International  
4 Relations from Salve Regina University; and

5           WHEREAS, Ms. Connell has devoted much of her life in support of healthcare in Rhode  
6 Island and has worked diligently to ensure that all Rhode Islanders receive the best healthcare  
7 services possible. After graduating from college, she joined the visiting Nurse Service and  
8 worked in the local neighborhoods and communities delivering much-needed healthcare services  
9 to the sick and elderly. She then brought her healthcare knowledge into the schools and taught  
10 health in middle school and established the first healthcare curriculum in the Newport public  
11 school system; and

12           WHEREAS, Kathleen Connell then proceeded to embark on a public service career  
13 where she served her constituents and the citizens of our State at all times with integrity and  
14 tireless service. She was a thoughtful leader who was always held in high regard by her peers.  
15 She began her distinguished public service career serving as a member of the Middletown School  
16 Committee from 1965 to 1976, and serving as its Chair from 1971 to 1976. She was elected to the  
17 Middletown Town Council in 1976, serving until 1982, and as the Council's Vice Chair from  
18 1980 to 1982; and

1           WHEREAS, Ms. Connell served one term in the Rhode Island State Senate, served as  
2 Vice Chair of the Democratic State Committee and was appointed to the Credentials Committee  
3 for the Democratic National Convention in 1988. Throughout her long public service career, she  
4 was a champion advocate for better healthcare, including long-term care, better pay for nurses,  
5 improving nursing education, and increasing access to quality healthcare for all citizens; and

6           WHEREAS, In 1986, Kathleen Connell was elected to serve as Rhode Island's Secretary  
7 of State, a position she held for three terms. As Secretary of State, she played a leading role on  
8 issues related to voter education and voter reform, and was a passionate advocate in support of  
9 increasing parity for women in all levels and aspects of government and society; and

10           WHEREAS, Prior to assuming the position as Rhode Island State Director of the  
11 American Association of Retired People, (AARP Rhode Island's former name) in 1999, Ms.  
12 Connell served as the Coordinator of Governmental Relations at Brown University's Northeast  
13 and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory; and

14           WHEREAS, In her more than twenty years of service as the leader of AARP Rhode  
15 Island, Ms. Connell has effectively represented the vital interest of Rhode Island's retirees,  
16 particularly those interests related to healthcare and public safety. Her vast knowledge of issues  
17 of importance to seniors and her many years of governmental experience made her the ideal  
18 person to represent the concerns and needs of Rhode Island's seniors to a wide array of important  
19 public policy people, from elected leaders at the legislative, executive and local levels to business  
20 groups, healthcare associations, and public safety groups. Her thoughts on the issues of the day  
21 have always been valued and listened to by the important decision-makers in our state; and

22           WHEREAS, Ms. Connell has served as a member of numerous important civic  
23 organizations during her exemplary public service career. She was a founding Director and Past  
24 President of Shake-A-Leg, a national organization for the treatment of spinal cord injuries. She  
25 has served on the Board of Directors of the Visiting Nurse Association of Newport and on the  
26 Board of Incorporators of Delta Dental. She has also been very active with the Japan-America  
27 Society/Black Ships Festival, serving as President and now as President Emeritus; and

28           WHEREAS, Ms. Connell has been the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions  
29 throughout her career including receiving a citation from the Consul General of Japan, the John  
30 E. Fogarty Humanitarian Award, the Salve Regina University, Alumna of the Year Award, and  
31 the Juliette Low Award from the Girl Scouts of Rhode Island; now, therefore be it

32           RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby congratulates the  
33 Honorable Kathleen Connell on her retirement as the Rhode Island Director of the American  
34 Association of Retired People (AARP), and thanks and honors her for her many years of

1 distinguished public service; and be it further

2           RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to

3 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Honorable Kathleen Connell.

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