

2022 -- H 8290

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

EXPRESSING DEEPEST CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF THE VENERABLE  
PHRA AJAHN BOUNTHANH PRASAVATH

Introduced By: Representatives Slater, Fenton-Fung, Shekarchi, Blazewski, J  
Lombardi, Hull, Filippi, Diaz, Ajello, and Kennedy

Date Introduced: May 26, 2022

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, It is with deep sadness that this House has learned of the passing of the  
2 Venerable Phra Ajahn Bounthanh Prasavath of Smithfield. He was an ordained Buddhist Monk  
3 and Head Abbot of Wat Lao Buddhovath of Rhode Island; and

4 WHEREAS, Mr. Prasavath was a native of Laos and while studying to be a Buddhist  
5 Monk as a young man in 1966, he decided to work with the CIA and the United States Special  
6 Forces in an attempt to keep the totalitarian communist forces from taking over his country. He  
7 was trained to be a radio operator for one of the United States Army Special Guerrilla Units  
8 (SGU), and saw combat duty along the Ho Chi Minh trail. More than 35,000 of his fellow SGU  
9 troops perished during the Vietnam War; and

10 WHEREAS, After the War, Mr. Prasavath was sent to a prison “re-education camp”,  
11 where he was sentenced to hard labor and daily indoctrination. He remained under harsh  
12 conditions for more than nine years before being able to escape on foot to Thailand. He was very  
13 lucky, because many others who attempted to escape were either shot and killed, or drowned in  
14 the Mekong River; and

15 WHEREAS, Mr. Prasavath immediately applied for and was granted asylum. He was  
16 sponsored by a fellow SGU radio operator who was living in Connecticut at the time, and Mr.  
17 Prasavath arrived in the United States on August 1, 2007. After spending a few weeks in  
18 Connecticut, he moved to Providence to finish his studies to become a Monk. Upon doing so, he  
19 set upon the task of finding a perfect site to build a Buddhist Temple in Rhode Island; and

1           WHEREAS, Mr. Prasavath found his special place in Smithfield, and built a beautiful  
2 temple on 22 acres of land. The temple is a wonderful and welcoming community of peaceful  
3 people who regularly host many special events for hundreds of people and are so grateful to live  
4 in a land of freedom. Mr. Prasavath proudly hangs his American uniform and numerous photos of  
5 elected officials and dignitaries, including notable photographs of Woonsocket Mayor Lisa-  
6 Baldelli-Hunt in front of a Laotian Flag that she flew at City Hall, Congressman David Cicilline  
7 at an event at the temple, and United States Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, whose father served as  
8 the United States Ambassador to Laos in 1973; and

9           WHEREAS, Mr. Prasavath served with distinction as the Head Abbot of Wat Lao  
10 Buddhovath (Buddhist Temple) of Rhode Island, and was a revered pillar of the local Lao  
11 community for more than thirty-six years. He was a kind man who served others with great love  
12 and compassion throughout his entire life; and

13           WHEREAS, Mr. Prasavath was the loving husband of the late Douangpy Southivong. He  
14 leaves behind his daughter, Phathaviphone Thounsavath and her husband, Kong, and was the  
15 loving grandfather of Kindly, Judy, Sunny and Ruby. He was also the brother of the late Ms.  
16 Thel; now, therefore be it

17           RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby  
18 expresses its deepest condolences on the passing of the Venerable Phra Ajahn Bounthanh  
19 Prasavath and honors him for his heroic service to our nation during the Vietnam War; and be it  
20 further

21           RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
22 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the Prasavath Family.

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