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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF MICHAEL T. ROARKE

Introduced By: Representatives Noret, Serpa, Jackson, Shekarchi, and Mattiello

Date Introduced: January 08, 2020

Referred To: House read and passed

1           WHEREAS, Michael T. “Mike” Roarke passed away surrounded by his loving family on  
2 July 27, 2019. He was the son of the late Walter and Mary Roarke, and was predeceased by his  
3 wife of fifty-nine years, Sue Roarke and siblings, Mary McKanna and John Roarke; and

4           WHEREAS, Mr. Roarke was born and raised in West Warwick, where he was a standout  
5 baseball, football and basketball player for the West Warwick Wizards in the 1940s, serving as  
6 the Captain of all three teams. After graduating from high school in 1948, he went on to attend  
7 Boston College, where he was a standout player and Captain of the Eagles baseball and football  
8 teams. He earned a Bachelor’s degree in 1952, and was awarded the James J. Heggie, Jr., and  
9 Thomas F. Scanlon Trophies in recognition and honor of his good character, outstanding  
10 leadership, scholastic and athletic achievements; and

11           WHEREAS, After graduating college, Mr. Roarke served our nation with honor and  
12 distinction as a radio operator in the United States Army from 1952 to 1954. After being  
13 honorably discharged, he embarked on a forty-two year professional baseball career as both a  
14 player and coach in the major and minor leagues. As a player, he toiled in the minors for a decade  
15 before breaking into the majors at the age of thirty with the Detroit Tigers in 1961, serving mostly  
16 as a backup catcher; and

17           WHEREAS, At the end of his playing career, Mr. Roarke was asked by the Tigers  
18 Manager to serve as the team’s bullpen coach, which lead to a second career for him in  
19 professional baseball as coach and manager. He coached for the Tigers and California Angels  
20 before he moved to the minors to manage in Toledo, San Antonio, Evansville and Wichita; and

1           WHEREAS, Mr. Roarke returned to the Major Leagues with the Chicago Cubs and  
2           gained some credit and notoriety for helping to develop a young, future Hall of Fame member,  
3           Bruce Sutter, into the dominant reliever of his generation; and

4           WHEREAS, Mr. Roarke later decided to return close to home in order to spend more  
5           time with his wife and children. He accepted a position with the Pawtucket Red Sox, working  
6           with Manager Joe Morgan from 1981 to 1983, where he played a key role in the development of  
7           future Red Sox pitchers Bruce Hurst and Dennis “Oil Can” Boyd. He also became part of  
8           professional baseball lore, and the record books, as part of the longest game in professional  
9           baseball history. He would go down as the winning manager of that epic 33 inning game when he  
10          took over as manager in the 22nd inning when Manager Joe Morgan was ejected; and

11          WHEREAS, Mr. Roarke would go on to serve as a pitching coach with the St Louis  
12          Cardinals, participating in two World Series in 1985 and 1987, and later coaching for the San  
13          Diego Padres before concluding his distinguished baseball career as a coach with the Boston Red  
14          Sox in 1994. He also coached in two Major League Baseball All Star Games; and

15          WHEREAS, Mr. Roarke spent much of his life giving back to the wider community. He  
16          served on the Board of Directors for Big Brothers of Rhode Island for more than twenty years,  
17          and established a nonprofit to support the renovation of John E. McCarthy Memorial Stadium in  
18          West Warwick. He also served as the Vice President of the West Warwick High School Class of  
19          1948. In recognition of his many athletic accomplishments, he has been inducted into the Halls of  
20          Fame of West Warwick High School, Boston College Varsity Club, Providence Gridiron Club,  
21          the National Irish American Baseball Hall of Fame, and the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame;  
22          and

23          WHEREAS, Mr. Roarke is survived by his children, Susan Roarke, Thomas Roarke,  
24          Karen Roarke and her husband, Doug Cluff, Janet O’Connell and her husband, Patrick, and Kelly  
25          Roarke. He also leaves behind his grandchildren, Michael O’Connell, Cameron Cluff, Hailey  
26          O’Connell, and Brennan Cluff, and one brother, Walter Roarke; and

27          WHEREAS, Mr. Roarke was a devoted family man to his wife and children. In his free  
28          time, he enjoyed playing golf at the West Warwick Country Club, reading good books, solving  
29          difficult crossword puzzles, quick dips in cold pools, eating coffee ice cream and Reese’s Peanut  
30          Butter Cups, and enjoying lunch with friends at his favorite restaurant, A. J.’s. Mr. Roarke will be  
31          remembered by many for being a wonderfully loyal friend and a true gentleman at all times. His  
32          loss is grievous, but the abiding love he gave to his family will forever live on in their hearts and  
33          memories; now, therefore be it

34          RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and

1 Providence Plantations hereby expresses its condolences to the Roarke Family on the passing of  
2 Michael Roarke; and be it further  
3           RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
4 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to Susan Roarke, Thomas Roarke, Karen Roarke,  
5 Janet O'Connell, and Kelly Roarke.

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