

RESOLUTION CELEBRATING JOSEPH L. BELMAN ON A CENTURY OF RESILIENCE AND DEDICATION

WHEREAS, Joseph L. Belman celebrates a century of resilience, dedication, service, and a life well lived on February 20, 2024, his hundredth birthday; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago City Council has been informed of this milestone by the Honorable Michael D. Rodriguez, Alderman of the 22nd Ward; and

WHEREAS, On February 20, 1924, in the small town of Pontiac, Illinois, Joseph L. Belman was born, into a world defined by a unique blend of simplicity and fortitude, and commenced on an extraordinary journey that would unfold across the canvas of decades and bear witness to the indomitable triumph of the human spirit; and

WHEREAS, Not merely a product of his time and place, Joe was a living testament to the enduring values that shaped the American Midwest; and

WHEREAS, Moving to Lockport, IL after being adopted into the caring embrace of Louise and Ireneo Belman, who imparted the lessons of diligence, responsibility, and community that would form the cornerstones of Joe's character, Joe's roots became intricately woven into the very fabric of the town's storied history; and

WHEREAS, This idyllic setting along the Illinois and Michigan Canal provided the backdrop for Joe's formative years, with the rhythmic labor of his father on the railroad providing the soundtrack; in an era shadowed by economic challenges and political upheaval, Joe's family, like many others, found solace and sustenance in the simplicity of life – cultivating their own garden and reaping the rewards of hard work; and

WHEREAS, However, Joe's journey wasn't just shaped by the broader strokes of history – it was also molded by the nuances of personal interactions, human kindness, and community; following an episode involving a stolen apple and a lesson in the transformative power of forgiveness and redemption, Father Gilbert redirected Joe's path through Joliet Catholic Academy, not only altering the course of Joe's education but also instilled a profound lesson about the importance of keeping one's word – a principle that would resonate throughout Joe's lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Amidst the challenges of youth, Joe discovered an unexpected source of joy, tranquility, and sanctuary from life's complexities in navigating the currents of the majestic Mississippi River; little did he know that this chapter of serenity would eventually yield to the call of duty, leading him to enlist in the Air Force during the tumultuous years of World War II; and

WHEREAS, As a B-17 Flying Fortress ball turret gunner, Joe's 35 combat missions thrust him into the perilous skies over Germany, exposing him to the capricious nature of anti-aircraft fire, the relentless threat of enemy fighters, and the unpredictability of wartime existence, like nothing but a frozen orange saving him from flak; and

WHEREAS, Returning to the United States in April 1945, Joe was discharged in October 1945 as a Staff Sergeant at Amarillo, Texas, and embarked on a unique journey home that resonates with the extraordinary camaraderie of a bygone era – hitchhiking through the vast expanse of the country, encountering acts of kindness that, in today's world, might seem unimaginable; and

WHEREAS, After returning home, Joe's life took a new direction in 1947, as he married Irene, and together they would share fifty-nine wonderful years; and

WHEREAS, Joe's commitment to service and advocacy didn't end with his discharge; his enduring dedication to his community was showcased through his involvement with the Citizens' Utility Board, the Will County Jury Commission, the American G.I. Forum, and the Illinois Hispanic Democratic Council, receiving numerous accolades, including the William Velasquez Volunteer of the Year Award in 1993 and the Leadership Award from United States Hispanic Leadership Institute and the Illinois Hispanic Democratic Council in 1996; and

WHEREAS, With an indomitable spirit and commitment to community service, Joe's impact extended far beyond his formal roles – whether through his involvement in youth development, coaching various sports, or his leadership in workers' unions, Joe's passion for mentorship, community, and advocacy always shone through; and

WHEREAS, One of Joe's proudest achievements during his tenure as Chairman of the Sator Sanchez Chapter of the G.I. Forum was the dedication of a school and park in honor of Sator Sanchez, a decorated World War II hero; rooted in personal connections and shared history, this dedication reflected Joe's commitment to preserving the legacy of those who had served alongside him; and

WHEREAS, While Joe's careers throughout his life were varied and diverse, including construction at the Argonne National Laboratory, it was his time working on the Steamboat MacKenzie, navigating the Mississippi River once more, that brought him unparalleled joy, with the tranquility of the river's currents mirroring the peace that came to characterize his life; and

WHEREAS, Joseph L. Belman's journey, from the tranquil waters of the Mississippi River to the tumultuous skies over Germany and back again, is a testament to the resilience, dedication to community, and enduring spirit that characterizes the Greatest Generation, and his life and his work stand as living testaments to the triumph of the human spirit in the face of adversity, exemplifying the principles of democracy, equality, and empowerment that continue to inspire and guide generations to come; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and the members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, do hereby congratulate Joseph L. Belman on his 100th Birthday, and wish him continued success and happiness; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to Joseph L. Belman as a token of our esteem, honor, and respect.



MICHAEL D. RODRIGUEZ
Alderman, 22nd Ward