**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO EXPRESS THE PROFOUND SORROW OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES UPON THE DEATH OF MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS R. OLSEN, USAF, RETIRED, OF SUMTER AND TO EXTEND THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY AND MANY FRIENDS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Major General Thomas R. Olsen, USAF, Retired, of Sumter on January 5, 2014, at the venerable age of seventy‑nine; and

Whereas, born to Oscar and Catherine Olsen of Houston on June 28, 1934, the young Tom Olsen joined the Air Force in 1957 after graduating from Texas A&M University in mechanical engineering, later earning a master’s degree in international relations from George Washington University; and

Whereas, as a command pilot with more than 4,400 flying hours, he flew the A‑10, F‑4, F‑86, F‑100, F‑102, and F‑111. Tom Olsen served throughout the United States and around the world, including assignments in Germany, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, The Netherlands, and the Persian Gulf; and

Whereas, during his thirty‑five years of active duty in the U.S. Air Force, he served as vice commander, Headquarters Ninth Air Force, and deputy commander, U.S. Central Command Air Forces, Shaw Air Force Base. In Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, he served as second in command for all U.S. and Allied Air Forces that destroyed Iraqi forces that had occupied Kuwait. His many military decorations and awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, and Meritorious Service Medal; and

Whereas, he was twice stationed at Shaw Air Force Base outside Sumter and retired in 1991 after his service in the Gulf War. After his retirement, for seventeen years he led the Sumter Base Defense Committee, which supported Shaw during the Pentagon’s moves to consolidate and close military bases across the country. The Texas native played a key role in keeping Shaw Air Force Base off base‑closure lists; and

Whereas, Major General William “Dutch” Holland, who succeeded Major General Olsen at the helm of the Sumter Base Defense Committee, said of him, “Not only did Shaw not decrease, much less close down, it actually grew, thanks to his leadership in the community and the State”; and

Whereas, once Tom Olsen retired, as Jeff Faw of the Tuomey Foundation said of the foundation board’s former chairman, “that was only the beginning of his accomplishments.” For the last two decades of his life, this servant leader immersed himself in his adopted community of Sumter, taking up several influential posts, one of them being founding chairman of the Tuomey Foundation (1995). He headed the board of this charitable arm of the regional hospital system right up until his death, having helped the Tuomey Foundation raise an estimated thirteen million dollars under his chairmanship; and

Whereas, among other activities, he served as a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Grace Baptist Church and member of the Sumter Rotary Club and Sumter Kiwanis Club (past president). He was also a member of the South Carolina Military Task Force and Governor’s Military Base Advisory Committee, member of the Selection Committee for the 5th District Service Academy Candidates under Senator Jim DeMint, and member and past president of the USC‑Sumter Partnership Educational Foundation; and

Whereas, for his many contributions to the betterment of our State and country, Tom Olsen received the Order of the Palmetto and the Outstanding Achievement Award from the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce. In addition, he was inducted into the National Aviation and Space Exploration Wall of Fame at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum; and

Whereas, predeceased by his first wife, Tom Olsen leaves to cherish his memory his beloved second wife, Jacquelyn “Jackie” Keels Olsen; four children, retired U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Richard Olsen (Mary Helen), Lisa Olsen Wesolick (Stephen), Mary Martin Geddings, and Mason Geddings; seven grandchildren; two great‑grandchildren; and a host of other family members and friends. He will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, express their profound sorrow upon the death of Major General Thomas R. Olsen, USAF, Retired, of Sumter and extend the deepest sympathy to his family and many friends.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to Mrs. Jackie Olsen for the family.

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