

Assembly Resolution No. 81

BY: M. of A. Wallace

CELEBRATING the life and legacy of The Honorable Michael A. Telesca, dedicated public servant and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, The Honorable Michael Anthony Telesca of Gates, New York, died on Thursday, March 5, 2020, at the age of 90; he was a United States District Court Judge for the Western District of New York for nearly four decades; and

WHEREAS, Over a long and preeminent career, Michael A. Telesca distinguished himself and his profession, serving tirelessly in the administration of the law, while diligently guarding over the rights of the citizens it serves; and

WHEREAS, Born on November 25, 1929, in Rochester, New York, Michael A. Telesca was the son of a garment worker and a United States Marine; and

WHEREAS, Michael A. Telesca graduated with a bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester in 1952, before attending and earning his law degree from the University of Buffalo Law School in 1955; and

WHEREAS, After law school, Michael A. Telesca followed in his father's footsteps and joined the United States Marine Corps; he served his country from 1955 until 1957 during the Korean Conflict, completing his military service with the esteemed rank of First Lieutenant; and

WHEREAS, Michael A. Telesca then entered private practice, eventually becoming a partner with the Rochester firm Lamb, Webster, Walz & Telesca; in 1972, he was elected a Monroe County Surrogate Court Judge, and was a designated Justice of the New York State Supreme Court for almost 10 years; and

WHEREAS, In 1982, Michael A. Telesca was appointed by Ronald Reagan as a United States District Court Judge for the Western District of New York, and was Chief Justice of that court from 1989 until 1996; and

WHEREAS, The Honorable Michael A. Telesca's motto was "Dignity In and Dignity Out," meaning all litigants needed to be treated with dignity and respect throughout the proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Michael A. Telesca continued as a District Court Judge, based in Rochester, and in 1996, was appointed to the Federal Alien Terrorist Removal Court, serving in this capacity until 2015; and

WHEREAS, In 2000, Governor George Pataki decided to bring an end to a lawsuit brought by inmates after the deadly Attica prison riot of 1971; the State of New York opted to pay \$12 million to inmates and the survivors of prisoners who died in the uprising, and the Governor, along with several others chose Michael A. Telesca to decide how to divide the award; and

WHEREAS, Michael A. Telesca was a member of the Board of Directors of the Federal Judicial Center, a training school for federal judges in Washington, D.C.; the Second Circuit Judicial Council; and the Editorial Advisory Board of the State-Federal Judicial Observer; and

WHEREAS, His commitment to excellence, and his spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; he served on numerous boards including: the Association for Mentally Retarded Persons, National Kidney Foundation, Genesee Hospital Foundation and the ARC of Monroe County, an advocacy group for mentally disabled persons; he was also active with the Rochester Chapter of the University of Buffalo Law Alumni Association and served as an emeritus member of the Dean's Advisory Council at the Law School; and

WHEREAS, Michael A. Telesca was the recipient of a 1986 Distinguished Alumnus Award for his judicial work, and in 2001 with a **Buffalo Law Review** Award, recognizing his service to both the University of Buffalo Law School and the Western New York community; and

WHEREAS, Michael A. Telesca also received the 2006 Edwin F. Jaeckle Award from the University at Buffalo Law School and the University at Buffalo Law Alumni Association, the highest honor the Law School and the Law Alumni Association can bestow; he was honored with this prestigious award for making significant contributions to both the Law School and the legal profession; and

WHEREAS, Michael A. Telesca's stellar reputation for fairness and firmness was acknowledged in 2006 when the downtown home of local legal services was renamed the Michael A. Telesca Center for Justice; and

WHEREAS, Michael A. Telesca is survived by his wife of 67 years, Ethel Telesca; two children, Michele Telesca and Stephen Telesca; two grandchildren, Andrea Telesca and Maria (Andrew) Loss; a sister, Mary Schmitt; two dear family friends, Tony Zaragoza and Terri Medina; and his long-time faithful secretary, Joan Countryman; as well as several nieces and nephews; and

WHEREAS, A master in mediating difficult matters, Michael A. Telesca will be remembered for his steadfast loyalty to the United States Constitution; his innate skill in discerning resolutions when others could not; and the ability to communicate with anyone, regardless of their status or background; and

WHEREAS, Michael A. Telesca, who displayed many unique qualities, lived an immensely beautiful life built on compassion, kindness, and respect for both the position he held and for others; he will be truly missed by all those who had the privilege and honor of knowing him; now,

therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life and legacy of The Honorable Michael A. Telesca, and to express its deepest condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of The Honorable Michael A. Telesca.