

BY: Senator KENNEDY

MOURNING the death of Richard J. "Dick" Thompson,
distinguished citizen 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 this great Empire State; and

WHEREAS, Richard J. Thompson, affectionately known as Dick, of Buffalo, New York, died on October 15 at the age of 92; and

WHEREAS, Born in Buffalo, New York, to parents who came from the city's Old First Ward, Richard J. Thompson was the youngest of seven children; he grew up on Englewood Avenue in the University District, graduated from Canisius High School in 1949 and received a bachelor's degree in English from Canisius College in 1953; and

WHEREAS, After serving the Nation in the Army, Richard J. Thompson taught for three years at his alma mater, Canisius High School, while earning a master's degree from the University of Buffalo, where he also went on to complete his doctorate; and

WHEREAS, From 1958 to 2001, Richard J. Thompson taught English and Irish literature at Canisius, becoming a full-time professor in 1972; his specialties included modern Irish literature, with an emphasis on William Butler Yeats and James Joyce, the Irish short story, and Irish drama, history and culture; and

WHEREAS, Richard J. Thompson, a lion of the English Department at Canisius University, was credited with establishing the first formal Irish studies program in Western New York when the former Canisius College started offering the concentration as a minor in 1973; he also built an impressive collection of Irish books in the college library; and

WHEREAS, A leading proponent of modern Irish literature in the United States and abroad, Richard J. Thompson founded the Canisius Irish Society and began leading summer cultural excursions in 1972, taking Canisius students, staff and alumni on 31 trips to the Emerald Isle; he also started a long tradition of bringing notable Irish poets and writers, such as Seamus Heaney and John Montague, to give public readings at the Canisius campus to meet with students; and

WHEREAS, Dedicated to supporting students and their education, Richard J. Thompson also assisted the St. Patrick Scholarship Fund for students in the Buffalo area, which has sent local students abroad for the summer to Ireland since 1960; also, for six semesters, he participated in the college-in-prison program at Attica Correctional Facility; and

WHEREAS, Truly a caring individual, Richard J. Thompson would always leave his office door open to students for enrichment or tutoring and often hosted students at his Parkside home for dinners and parties celebrating their academic achievements; and

WHEREAS, Diligently serving as Chairman of the English Department for six years, Richard J. Thompson led 26 full-time faculty members and close to 150 English majors, the largest number in the school's history; and

WHEREAS, A renowned author, Richard J. Thompson published **Everlasting Voices: Aspects of the Modern Irish Short Story** in 1989; he also authored dozens of articles and book reviews; and

WHEREAS, A patron of the arts, Richard J. Thompson was a celebrated singer in the Canisius glee club, became a devotee of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, supported the old Studio Theatre on Lafayette Avenue and was an early member of the board of directors for Vincent and Chris O'Neill's Irish Classical Theatre Company; and

WHEREAS, Involved in many community organizations, Richard J. Thompson was a member of the Modern Language Association, the American Association of University Professors, the Erie-Limerick Twin County Committee, the American Conference for Irish Studies and the Irish American Cultural Institute; and

WHEREAS, Richard J. Thompson received a myriad of honors due to his exceptional community service, and was most proud of a citation stone a former student placed for him at the Western New York Irish Famine Memorial on Buffalo's waterfront; and

WHEREAS, Richard J. Thompson distinguished himself in his profession and by his sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of his community; and

WHEREAS, Richard J. Thompson's commitment to excellence, and his spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Richard J. Thompson is survived by his wife of 64 years, Jacquelyn "Jackie" Bowden-Brown, and his two daughters, Susan Hamilton and Elizabeth Thompson; five sons, Brendan, Philip, Michael, and twins Eric and Jay; 13 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Remembered for his wanderlust, Richard J. Thompson would often take his family on adventurous trips, including driving through Europe for a year; he and his wife saw a remarkable 65 to 70 countries together; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Richard J. Thompson leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Richard J. Thompson, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Richard J. Thompson.