

BY: Senator O'MARA

COMMEMORATING the 50th Anniversary of the National
Soaring Museum on October 5, 2019

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that the quality of life of the citizens of the State of New York is greatly enriched by its exceptional cultural, educational and recreational institutions; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the National Soaring Museum to be celebrated with a Gala on Saturday, October 5, 2019, in Elmira, New York; and

WHEREAS, The journey leading to the establishment of the National Soaring Museum (NSM) was interesting, challenging, and rewarding, as has been its progress over the five decades since its founding; the NSM and those in the American soaring community are indebted to the visionaries who, through their hard work, dedication and support, have allowed it to become the fine institution it is today; and

WHEREAS, Serious thought about a museum dedicated to the history of soaring in America began to percolate after World War II; in 1952, Sherman Voorhees, an Elmira resident and one of the SSA's founders, proposed a soaring museum be established at Harris Hill due to the important role the Elmira area had played in the growth of the American soaring movement; and

WHEREAS, In 1958, the local soaring club, the Elmira Area Soaring Corporation (EASC), elected to take advantage of space offered in Elmira's Strathmont Estate which was being converted into a local history museum; and

WHEREAS, Under the able leadership of its president, Howard Burr, EASC members created a soaring history exhibit in the estate's carriage house which opened in the summer of 1959; the collection included the historic, restored Arnot-Chanute-Herring glider and the Fred Loomis photographs of early national soaring contests held at Harris Hill; and

WHEREAS, After being open for only a short time, the history museum was forced to close; the next major evolutionary step toward a national soaring museum occurred in 1968, when the EASC, which had been renamed the Harris Hill Soaring Corp (HHSC), took advantage of space offered by Chemung County in Harris Hill's Administration Building; and

WHEREAS, Once again, HHSC volunteers rose to the challenge, creating the exhibits and overseeing museum operations; concurrent with these activities, HHSC leaders drafted a proposal to the SSA's Board for the creation of the National Soaring Museum; and

WHEREAS, During this time, Paul A. Schweizer presented the HHSC's

proposal to the SSA Board at its summer meeting in 1969; the proposal to locate the National Soaring Museum, library, and archives at Harris Hill had the strong support of New York State, Chemung County, and other local organizations; and

WHEREAS, Under the luminous direction of SSA president, Bernald S. Smith, a resolution accepting the proposal was unanimously agreed to by the SSA Board on July 4, 1969, and the National Soaring Museum officially opened its doors to the public on July 22, 1969; and

WHEREAS, Today, the National Soaring Museum owns more than 100 sailplanes and gliders, 32 of which are currently displayed; it also houses the Soaring Hall of Fame and the SSA's collection of historic films and photos documenting early national contests; and

WHEREAS, In addition, the National Soaring Museum holds archives of the SSA containing a treasure trove of information relating to the history of soaring in America, the personalities responsible for making it the outstanding sport it is, and thousands of artifacts related to soaring contributed by many individuals; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body that when organizations of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be recognized and applauded by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the National Soaring Museum on October 5, 2019; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the National Soaring Museum, Elmira, New York.