Senate Resolution No. 3278

BY: Senator PARKER

MOURNING the death of former New York State Assemblyman Joseph Ferris, dedicated public servant and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, There are certain outstanding public servants who, through their selfless commitment and dedication, served to better the quality of life in their community and had a measurable positive impact on the lives of its residents; Joseph Ferris was one such individual; and

WHEREAS, Former New York State Assemblyman Joseph Ferris of Brooklyn, New York, died on Saturday, June 20, 2020, at the age of 85, due to complications related to the coronavirus; and

WHEREAS, A lifelong Brooklynite, Joseph Ferris was born on October 10, 1934, and was the oldest of Catherine Downes' and William Ferris' five children; and

WHEREAS, Joseph Ferris graduated from St. Francis College, Class of 1956, with a bachelor's degree in history; and

WHEREAS, He then served in the United States Army Reserve and spent 15 years teaching in New York City schools, including several years as a teacher at Rikers Island prison; and

WHEREAS, Joseph Ferris first became interested in local politics while working with Against Investment Discrimination, a group who fought redlining policies in the City; and

WHEREAS, The block associations and civic groups he helped found include the Kensington Community Council; the Park Slope Civic Council; the Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats, originally the Slope Independent Democrats, and the Brooklyn Irish-American Day Parade; as well as the Magnolia Tree Institute, a Bedford-Stuyvesant non-profit that is responsible for planting hundreds of trees throughout the borough; and

WHEREAS, Joseph Ferris' first campaign for elected office was in 1964 when he ran for Congress; five years later, he served as the Campaign Manager on Norman Mailer's mayoral campaign, where he was referred to as a "one-man think tank"; and

WHEREAS, In 1970 and 1972, Joseph Ferris lost extremely close races to represent the 51st District in the New York State Assembly; victorious in 1974, he served five terms before retiring in 1984; and

WHEREAS, While in the Assembly, Joseph Ferris served as Chairman of the Legislative Commission on Science and Technology, as well as the Chair of the Assembly Subcommittee on Public Power; and
WHEREAS, In the summer of 1984, Joseph Ferris married Joan Ferris, and together they were the proud parents of two sons, Joseph and Thomas; and

WHEREAS, A proud and devoted father, Joseph Ferris passed on to his sons a love for civics, history, New York City and public service; and

WHEREAS, After retiring from elected office, Joseph Ferris stayed active in Brooklyn working as a substitute teacher, penning a Brooklyn Paper column, and continuing to advocate for causes around the neighborhood and city including the implementation of term limits on City Council members and the preservation of what is now known as the Old Stone House in Washington Park; and

WHEREAS, Joseph Ferris worked to stabilize the then-underused Old Stone House in Park Slope, which played a pivotal role in the American Revolution, and turn it into an official historic house and museum; and

WHEREAS, By the early 2000s, Joseph Ferris was an active board member at the Old Stone House and was involved with the Irish American Parade Committee's efforts to memorialize the Battle of Brooklyn on a broader scale; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his parents, Catherine Downes and William Ferris, his brother, John Ferris and his wife, Joan Ferris, Joseph Ferris is survived by his two sons, Joseph M. Ferris and Thomas Ferris; daughter-in-law, Eugenia Ferris; one granddaughter, Sophia Ferris; his brother, William Ferris; and his two sisters, Eileen Ferris and Mary Lou Amaro; and

WHEREAS, Every citizen in New York State has most certainly benefited, in one way or another, from the deep dedication, intelligence and commitment Joseph Ferris brought to his work as a mentor, legislator and public policy-maker; a loyal friend and trusted advisor, he will be deeply missed and truly merits the grateful tribute of this Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of former New York State Assemblyman Joseph Ferris, 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 Joseph Ferris.