Assembly Resolution No. 397

BY: M. of A. Lavine

MEMORIALIZING Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 3, 2023, as Press Freedom Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of World Press Freedom Day

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize official days that are set aside to increase awareness; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 3, 2023, as Press Freedom Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of World Press Freedom Day; and

WHEREAS, In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed May 3rd of each year as World Press Freedom Day to celebrate the fundamental principles of freedom of the press; evaluate freedom of the press around the world; defend against attacks on the independence of the media; and pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession; and

WHEREAS, The 2018 World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) warned that "Hostility towards the media, openly encouraged by political leaders, and the efforts of authoritarian regimes to export their vision of journalism pose a threat to democracies."; and

WHEREAS, Freedom of the press, a cornerstone of American democracy, is enshrined in the first amendment to the Constitution; it helps to promote a more transparent government, one that involves both citizens and residents; and

WHEREAS, Journalists and media workers from New York State and around the world should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State for their essential role in promoting government accountability, defending democratic activity, and strengthening civil society, despite threats to the safety of those journalists and media workers; it is important they are able to do their job without fear or repercussions; and

WHEREAS, There have been seven New York Journalists who have died while doing their job since New York became a state: Lynde Walter Buckingham, New York Herald, died on June 23, 1863, in Aldie, Virginia, as a result of an ambush during the U.S. Civil War; Carlo Tresca, II Martello (The Hammer), died on January 11, 1943, in New York City, believed to have been killed by a hitman; Manuel de Dios Unanue, El Diario La Prensa, died on March 11, 1992, in Queens, New York, by Colombian drug traffickers; Bill Biggart, Freelance photographer, died on September 11, 2001, in Lower Manhattan, New York City, while photographing the rescue effort outside the World Trade Center; Paul

Klebnikov, American journalist, died on July 9, 2004, in Moscow, Russia, after being shot by unknown assailants; Chris Hondros, American Pulitzer Prize nominated photojournalist, was killed on April 20, 2011, in Libya;

and Marie Colvin, Award Winning Journalist, was murdered in 2012, in Syria, while covering the Syrian Civil War, it was said she was specifically targeted because of her profession, for the purpose of silencing those reporting on the growing opposition movement in the country; and

WHEREAS, Challenges to free speech and expression appear more frequently and in many more forms; and

WHEREAS, For the first time, in the reports 23-year history, RSF added the United States to the 2018 deadliest places to practice journalism worst offenders list; and

WHEREAS, The group's findings underscore the rising animosity journalists across the world have encountered in the past year; and

WHEREAS, The valuable and respected work of journalists often puts them at specific risk of intimidation, harassment and violence, the presence of which often deters journalists from continuing their work or encourages self-censorship, consequently depriving society of important information; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is deeply concerned by all human rights violations and abuses committed in relation to the safety of journalists and media workers, including killing, torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and arbitrary detention, expulsion, intimidation, harassment, threats and acts of other forms of violence; and

WHEREAS, Freedom of the press enhances public accountability, transparency, and participation in civil society and democratic governance; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that journalist know they are protected when doing their job, and that there be greater awareness of this serious issue; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to memorialize Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim May 3, 2023, as Press Freedom Day in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of World Press Freedom Day; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York.