

Senator Meekhof offered the following concurrent resolution:

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 36.

A concurrent resolution of tribute offered as a memorial for Patricia L. Birkholz, former member of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Whereas, It is with great sorrow that we learned of the passing of Senator Patricia Birkholz, a highly respected member of this legislative body for eight years and of the Michigan House of Representatives for six years. She will be remembered for her dedicated public service, ability to work with colleagues from both sides of the aisle, and her commitment to protecting Michigan's environment for both current and future generations; and

Whereas, Patty was born in Allegan, graduated from Western Michigan University, and worked as a speech pathologist before beginning her career in public service as a member of the Saugatuck Township Parks and Recreation Commission in 1972. She would serve at the local and county levels for 24 years during which she was Saugatuck Township trustee, Saugatuck Township treasurer, and Allegan County treasurer; and

Whereas, When Patty was elected to the Michigan Legislature in 1996, she was the first woman state representative elected from Allegan County. She was quickly recognized for her legislative insight, work ethic, and consensus-building ability. She was named the 1997 Rookie of the Year by the Michigan Manufacturers Association, the 2001 Legislator of the Year by the Michigan Township Association, and one of the 50 Most Influential Women in Western Michigan in 2002 by the Grand Rapids Business Journal. While in the Michigan House of Representatives, she was chosen by her colleagues to serve as the Assistant Republican Floor Leader from 1997 to 1998 and then as the first female Republican Speaker Pro Tempore from 1999 to 2002; and

Whereas, She was elected to the Michigan Senate in 2002 and became the first female elected President Pro Tempore, a position she held from 2003 to 2006. During her time in the Michigan Senate, her knowledge and passion for Michigan's environment were especially valuable in her responsibilities as chair of the Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee. Among her many notable achievements was passage of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, water withdrawal assessment laws, strict ballast water standards, and the creation of the Michigan Recreation Passport as a new mechanism to fund state parks; and

Whereas, While known as a champion of Michigan's natural resources and the environment, Patty was also a fierce advocate for children, families, and local governments. She was proud of her work to promote early childhood education, fight methamphetamine use, and consolidate Michigan planning laws. Patty was also the author of legislation to develop renewable energy standards, create safe havens for abandoned babies, and institute a tax check-off to fund breast cancer research; and

Whereas, After leaving the Legislature, her passion and commitment to Michigan's land and water resources continued as Governor Rick Snyder appointed her director of the Office of the Great Lakes and as Michigan's representative to the Great Lakes Commission. She was also appointed by former President Barack Obama to the National Sea Grant Advisory Board; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That we offer this expression of our highest tribute to honor the memory of Patricia L. Birkholz, a member of the House of Representatives from 1997 to 2002 and a member of the Senate from 2003 to 2010; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Birkholz family as evidence of our lasting esteem for her memory.