

2023 -- H 6130

LC002492

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

HOUSE RESOLUTION

EXTENDING CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF DISABILITY RIGHTS ACTIVIST,
JUDITH ELLEN HEUMANN

Introduced By: Representatives Spears, Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Cotter, Carson,
Donovan, Speakman, Henries, Morales, and Kennedy

Date Introduced: March 07, 2023

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, It is with sadness that this House has learned of the passing of Judy
2 Heumann, leader of the San Francisco contingent, who protested for twenty-four grueling days, in
3 their ultimately successful fight for enforcement of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; and

4 WHEREAS, Born in Philadelphia, Judy Heumann was the daughter of Werner and Ilse
5 Heumann. At three months old, she contracted polio and spent three months in an iron lung, and
6 resultantly spent her life in a wheel chair; and

7 WHEREAS, Ms. Heumann's parents were both survivors and fighters. Her father and
8 mother's parents had perished in Nazi Germany under Hitler after having sent their children to
9 safety in America, and her mother spent many years fighting for Judy's education rights at a time
10 in our country's history when disabled often meant 2nd class, shunned or ignored; and

11 WHEREAS, Eventually, at the age of nine, Ms. Heumann was enrolled in special
12 disabled classes. She attended a special high school, graduated from Long Island University, and
13 earned her Master's degree from the University of California at Berkeley; and

14 WHEREAS, In 1970, while still in school, Ms. Heumann gained recognition for her
15 efforts as an advocate for the disabled, a calling and journey that would last throughout her life;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, In 1973, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act had been signed into law by
18 then President Richard Nixon but was still not enforced. The American Coalition of Citizens with
19 Disabilities (ACCD), which Ms. Heumann had helped to found, and protestors from ten States

1 began protests to force the Health, Education and Welfare Secretary to sign and enforce the
2 regulations; and

3 WHEREAS, After a few days, many of the protest groups had given up, but the San
4 Francisco protestors, led and organized by Ms. Heumann continued their efforts, sacrificing every
5 human comfort and bringing about a revolution that clearly illustrated the resilience and strength
6 of herself and those she was fighting to protect; and

7 WHEREAS, On April 28th of 1977, victory was achieved after 24 days of protest, which
8 became the longest sit-in of a federal building in American history, a record that still holds today;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Section 504 paved the way for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
11 in 1990, which extended the anti-discrimination rules to private sector workplaces, and resulted in
12 significant changes to accessibility for disabled individuals; and

13 WHEREAS, Ms. Heumann's fight for the rights of the disabled did not end there. From
14 1993 to 2001, she served in the Clinton administration as an Assistant Secretary in the Office of
15 Special Education and Rehabilitation Services in the Department of Education, and was
16 appointed Special Adviser on International Disability Rights by President Barack Obama. She
17 also held positions as an adviser, was a fellow or board member with myriad institutions, and was
18 involved in passage of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities,
19 which was ratified in May 2008; and

20 WHEREAS, Judy Heumann dedicated her life to fighting for access for herself and others
21 to a life fully and equally lived and fully enjoyed with all the benefits that must be bequeathed
22 and entitled to all; now, therefore be it

23 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
24 extends deepest condolences on the passing of Judith Heumann, and recognizes and honors her
25 memory and accomplishments in the disability rights movement; and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
27 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Rick Heumann and Family.

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