

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 118

Recognizing the contributions of Clela Rorex, a pioneering county clerk who, in 1975, advanced civil rights for all couples seeking to be married.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 23, 2023

Mr. BENNET (for himself and Mr. HICKENLOOPER) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the contributions of Clela Rorex, a pioneering county clerk who, in 1975, advanced civil rights for all couples seeking to be married.

Whereas Clela Ann Rorex (referred to in this preamble as “Clela”) was born in Denver on July 23, 1943;

Whereas Clela’s mother, Ruby Rorex, was a dance and theater teacher, and her father, Cecil Rorex, served for 30 years as clerk of Routt County, Colorado, where Clela grew up in Steamboat Springs;

Whereas Clela earned her bachelor’s degree from the University of Colorado Boulder in 1973 and a master’s degree in Public Administration from the University of Colorado Denver in 1981;

Whereas, in January 1975, at the age of 31, Clela became Boulder County Clerk and Recorder;

Whereas, in 1975, when a same-sex couple requested a marriage license in Boulder County, Clela consulted the assistant district attorney and learned that Colorado State laws did not specifically prohibit granting a marriage license to a same-sex couple;

Whereas, as a newly elected county clerk, Clela issued a marriage license to Dave McCord and Dave Zamora, the first marriage license issued to a same-sex couple in the United States;

Whereas Clela was quoted in 2016 as saying, “After having been so deeply involved in the women’s rights movements, who was I to then deny a right to anyone else? It wasn’t my job to legislate morality.”;

Whereas, after issuing the first marriage license to a same-sex couple in 1975, Clela issued 5 more marriage licenses to same-sex couples over the next month;

Whereas national news outlets circulated Clela’s groundbreaking story, after which she reported receiving a deluge of death threats and condemnation in hundreds of letters and phone calls to the Boulder County Clerk’s office;

Whereas, despite the threats, Clela continued her advocacy efforts on behalf of the LGBTQ community, including by marching, volunteering, and donating to LGBTQ efforts for decades;

Whereas, in 2014, a series of court rulings cleared the way for same-sex marriages in Colorado, and, in 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States legalized same-sex

marriage nationwide, 40 years after Clela issued the first same-sex marriage license in the United States;

Whereas Clela was 78 years old when she died on June 19, 2022, in Longmont, Colorado;

Whereas, due to her advocacy for human rights, Boulder County, Colorado, declared July 23, 2022, to be “Clela Rorex Day”; and

Whereas Clela should be recognized for her leadership as a national civil rights leader, paving the way for countless individuals: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) recognizes—

3 (A) the contributions of Clela Rorex as a
4 pioneer for civil rights and same-sex marriage;

5 (B) the respect and bravery Clela Rorex
6 demonstrated when issuing the first same-sex
7 marriage license in the United States; and

8 (C) the courage Clela Rorex exhibited fol-
9 lowing the threats she received when she issued
10 marriage licenses to same-sex couples; and

11 (2) designates March 26, 2023, as “Clela Rorex
12 Day”.

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