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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

SENATE RESOLUTION

EXPRESSING DEEPEST CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF J. WILLIAM W.
HARSCH, ESQ.

Introduced By: Senator Dawn M. Euer

Date Introduced: February 03, 2025

Referred To: Placed on the Senate Consent Calendar

1 WHEREAS, It is with deep sadness that this Senate of the State of Rhode Island has
2 learned of the passing of J. William W. Harsch, Esq., a distinguished attorney and exemplary
3 public servant for six decades. He was the devoted husband of Constance Mann Harsch; and

4 WHEREAS, William Harsch was born in Washington D.C., to Joseph Harsch and Anne
5 Wood Harsch. He attended the Beauvoir and St. Albans Schools, each a National Cathedral
6 School, and later attended the Pomfret School in Connecticut. Mr. Harsch graduated from
7 Williams College in 1960, and spent a year studying at Cambridge University in the United
8 Kingdom. After a year of distinguished service to our nation as a member of the United States
9 Army, Mr. Harsch proceeded to graduate from Harvard Law School in 1964; and

10 WHEREAS, William Harsch's public service career began in the mid-1960s when he
11 served on Capitol Hill as a staff member in the United States Congress. Mr. Harsch later accepted
12 a position to serve as the Director of Special Projects for MIT's Urban Systems Laboratory,
13 where he promoted high-speed rail development in the Northeast Corridor with a foundation that
14 was established by former Rhode Island United States Senator Claiborne Pell and the former
15 president of Textron, G. William Miller; and

16 WHEREAS, Thanks to his tireless work ethic, abiding integrity, and high intelligence,
17 Mr. Harsch was appointed by former Rhode Island Governor Philip Noel, to serve as the
18 Chairman of the State Public Utilities Commission and head of the State Energy Policy Office.
19 Mr. Harsch also served with distinction as the Executive Director of the New England Regional

1 Commission, where he coordinated key initiatives with the New England Governors; and

2 WHEREAS, William Harsch was an enthusiastic supporter and key advisor to J. Joseph
3 Garrahy's successful campaign for Governor, helping Governor Garrahy to formulate his ideas
4 and proposals for a new Department of Environmental Management. After Governor Garrahy
5 was elected, Mr. Harsch served as the first Director of the Rhode Island Department of
6 Environmental Management and in this capacity, Mr. Harsch worked with the Town of
7 Jamestown to establish Beavertail State Park; and

8 WHEREAS, In 1977, President Jimmy Carter asked Mr. Harsch to serve as his Deputy
9 Associate Director in the Office of Management and Budget. Mr. Harsch played a key role in the
10 development and creation of FEMA in 1978, and the enactment and implementation of the
11 Energy Security Act of 1980, which included the important concepts of energy conservation and
12 alternative energy production; and

13 WHEREAS, At the end of the Carter administration, Mr. Harsch joined the law firm of
14 Powers & McAndrew, which eventually became the Providence office of the New England Law
15 Partnership. Mr. Harsch later managed the law firm's Washington office, where he focused on
16 litigating energy rate cases before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission; and

17 WHEREAS, William Harsch returned to Rhode Island permanently in the 1990s where
18 he established a thriving practice that specialized in environmental law, representing citizens
19 groups and municipalities. Among his many notable achievements, Mr. Harsch successfully
20 represented the Town of North Kingstown against a proposal to place an incinerator at Quonset,
21 won a legal battle to bring clean water to Pascoag residents who had been receiving contaminated
22 water for six months, and won a landmark free speech case on behalf of a North Kingstown
23 woman who was sued by a group of developers for speaking out against a landfill that posed a
24 threat to the Town's drinking water supply; and

25 WHEREAS, Mr. Harsch's extensive public service career also included serving on the
26 Board of the Quonset Development Corporation, and served as the Vice Chair of the Rhode
27 Island Ethics Commission. Mr. Harsch also ran twice for the office of Rhode Island Attorney
28 General. In his free time, he enjoyed spending time at the Ocean, swimming at all times,
29 regardless of the temperature, as well as sailing, rowing, gardening, reading about history and
30 spending time with his family; and

31 WHEREAS, In addition to his wife, Constance, William Harsch leaves behind his
32 children, Joseph Close Harsch II, Christiana Wood Harsch, and Elizabeth Fowler Harsch-Fricke,
33 and his grandchildren, Kyle Scotland Harsch, Joseph Close Harsch, III, and William Steelman
34 Fricker. Mr. Harsch also leaves behind his daughter-in-law Sonja Harsch, son-in-law Paul

1 Fricker, and his brothers Jonathan H. Harsch and Paul A. Harsch, III; now, therefore be it

2 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby expresses its deepest
3 condolences to the Harsch Family on the passing of J. William W. Harsch, Esq.; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
5 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Constance Mann Harsch and Family.

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