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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

SENATE RESOLUTION

EXPRESSING DEEPEST CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF THE HONORABLE
JOSEPH A. ABBATE

Introduced By: Senators Bissaillon, Ciccone, and Paolino

Date Introduced: April 14, 2026

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, It is with deep sadness that this Senate has learned of the passing of the
2 Honorable Joseph A. Abbate, of Lincoln. He was the beloved husband of Kathy A. Abbate, with
3 whom he shared a caring and devoted marriage, and the cherished father of Leah M. Abbate. His
4 love, guidance, and unwavering commitment to his family were the guiding forces of his life; and

5 WHEREAS, Born in the City of Providence, Joseph A. Abbate was the second son of
6 four boys born to the late Antonio and Concetta Abbate. He remained deeply connected to his
7 roots and community throughout his life; and

8 WHEREAS, From humble beginnings, Joseph forged a remarkable path through
9 determination and resilience, joining the United States Army Reserves at the age of 16 as one of
10 its youngest enlistees, and beginning a lifelong journey defined by discipline, perseverance, and
11 service to others; and

12 WHEREAS, Joseph's distinguished career in public service included 27 years with the
13 City of Providence, where he rose from an entry-level position to serve as Deputy Director and
14 Acting Director of the Mayor's Office of Community Development (now known as the
15 Department of Planning and Development), and further served as Executive Director of the
16 Providence Economic Development Corporation and Legal Counsel for the Providence Plan
17 Housing Corporation; and

18 WHEREAS, A committed and accomplished scholar, he graduated summa cum laude
19 from Providence College with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1986, attended the college's MBA

1 Program, and earned his Juris Doctor from Suffolk University Law School in 1991 while working
2 full-time, illustrating extraordinary dedication by attending evening classes and completing his
3 degree ahead of schedule; and

4 WHEREAS, In 2002, he was appointed as an Associate Judge of the Providence Housing
5 Court and later served for nine years as an Associate Judge of the Providence Municipal Court,
6 where he earned a reputation as a fair, thoughtful, and compassionate jurist who treated all who
7 appeared before him with dignity and respect; and

8 WHEREAS, Joseph served the State of Rhode Island as Director of the Law Revision
9 Office for the General Assembly. He was deeply valued by his former colleagues and was widely
10 respected for his legal acumen, intellect, and commitment to the integrity of the law; and

11 WHEREAS, In addition to his public roles, he maintained a private law practice
12 concentrating in domestic and juvenile law, commercial lending, personal injury, real estate, and
13 zoning law, and also served as Assistant Town Solicitor for the Town of Smithfield from 2006-
14 2009; and

15 WHEREAS, He was appointed as a Magistrate of the Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal in
16 2013 and elevated to Administrative Magistrate in 2018, fulfilling a lifelong dream and
17 conducting himself on the bench with integrity, impartiality, and an unwavering commitment to
18 justice; and

19 WHEREAS, Judge Abbate further contributed to the legal and civic community through
20 his service on the Rhode Island Commission on Judicial Tenure and Discipline, the Board of
21 Governors of the Rhode Island Trial Judges Association, and numerous civic and cultural
22 organizations, including the Trinity Repertory Company and St. Augustine Church; and

23 WHEREAS, A man of deep faith, he was a lifelong communicant and parishioner of St.
24 Augustine Church and the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, and his life reflected the values of
25 compassion, humility, and service that he held dear; and

26 WHEREAS, Beyond his professional accomplishments, Joseph Abbate was the
27 cornerstone of his family, finding his greatest joy in time spent with loved ones, whether at his
28 family beach house in Narragansett, around the table sharing pizzas he prepared, or celebrating
29 cherished traditions rooted in his Italian heritage, including cooking elaborate holiday meals,
30 baking traditional pastries, and sharing his homemade limoncello. He treasured the many years
31 spent at The Old Canteen in Providence, where he could often be found among friends, enjoying
32 good food, fellowship, and the camaraderie of a place that held special meaning in his life; and

33 WHEREAS, Joseph was also passionate about gardening, running, and reading, and was
34 known for his generosity in sharing his talents and treasured customs with family and friends,

1 leaving behind lasting memories imbued with warmth, laughter, and love; and

2 WHEREAS, Throughout a courageous nine-year battle with prostate cancer, Judge
3 Abbate demonstrated extraordinary strength, quiet resolve, and unwavering perseverance,
4 continuing to faithfully carry out his judicial responsibilities while undergoing treatment and
5 never seeking sympathy, exemplifying the very highest standards of dedication and dignity in
6 public service; and

7 WHEREAS, Besides his wife and daughter, Joseph is survived by his brothers, Anthony
8 Abbate and William Abbate, and his niece, Nicole Eastwood. He was predeceased by his brother,
9 David Abbate; and

10 WHEREAS, The Honorable Joseph A. Abbate will be remembered as a humble
11 gentleman, an accomplished jurist, a dedicated public servant, and, above all, a loving family man
12 whose life was defined by integrity, faith, and an abiding commitment to others; now, therefore
13 be it

14 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island hereby expresses its deepest
15 condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends of the Honorable Joseph A. Abbate;
16 and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
18 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the family of the Honorable Joseph A. Abbate.

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