

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2013

SENATE RESOLUTION

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY ON THE PASSING OF RAYMOND A. LAFAZIA

Introduced By: Senators Lynch, Goodwin, Paiva Weed, Ruggerio, and DiPalma

Date Introduced: January 10, 2013

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, It is with considerable sadness that this Senate has learned of the passing of
2 Raymond LaFazia, the father of District Court Chief Judge Jeanne LaFazia and the father-in-law
3 of our colleague, George Mason; and

4 WHEREAS, Raymond LaFazia's life was built on service to his country, to his state, to
5 his profession, and to the people surrounding him. He was born 88 years ago to his proud parents,
6 the late Emil and Anna (Peloso) LaFazia. As a young man, he responded to his country's needs
7 during the dark days of World War II by enlisting in the Army Air Corps after his graduation
8 from Mount Pleasant High School. He flew 38 combat missions as a ball turret gunner in B-24's,
9 where his bravery earned him The Distinguished Flying Cross, silver and gold oak leaf clusters,
10 and the Certificate of Valor; and

11 WHEREAS, Following the war, Mr. LaFazia continued his education at the University of
12 Rhode Island and then at Boston University, where he earned a law degree. He clerked with
13 Rhode Island Legal Aid and embarked on a prestigious legal career that spanned six decades.
14 Along with his partner, Bill Gunning, Ray established Gunning and LaFazia, which became one
15 of the most-respected law firms in the state. Always aware of the profound importance of
16 advocating for those in greatest need, Ray handled numerous cases pro bono throughout his
17 career; and

18 WHEREAS, In addition to serving the needs of his clients, Ray took time to advance the
19 legal profession in the state. He served as the Dean of the Rhode Island Bar Association and
20 never hesitated to share his time and insights with younger lawyers and students. His protégés

1 include an august array of legal minds – members of the state and federal judiciary, leaders of the
2 Bar, a former governor, and president of a local hospital. He made sure that his law firm modeled
3 equality in opportunity by including women among its lawyers at a time when other firms had
4 none; and

5 WHEREAS, Throughout his life, Ray’s work earned him the admiration of his peers. He
6 served as a Bar Examiner and as a member of the Advisory Committee on Rules for the U.S.
7 Court of Appeals. He also received the Ralph P. Semonoff Award for Professionalism; and

8 WHEREAS, Ray was never content with the status quo. At the age of 53, when most of
9 his counterparts were slowing down, Ray embraced bicycling and toured much of the continental
10 U.S., the Baja, and Great Britain. He cycled up Mount Evans, Mount Washington, and Mount
11 Ranier. He encouraged others to be equally active by hosting the Narragansett Bay Wheelmen’s
12 “Polar Bear” bicycle ride for 35 years. At age 75, Ray bicycled 500 miles through the mountains
13 of Montana. Even in his final year, Ray could be seen cycling from his home to the gym,
14 modeling a commitment to discipline and determination that inspired those who saw him; and

15 WHEREAS, Perhaps Ray’s greatest legacy is the loving family he leaves behind,
16 including his wife, Ellen, his son, Raymond Alan, his daughter, The Honorable Jeanne LaFazia,
17 and her husband, George Mason. He also leaves a brother, George, and his wife, Virginia, his
18 sisters, Catherine Deion and her husband Joe, Lois Guilford and her husband, Earle, and many
19 wonderful nieces, nephews, and cousins. Ray was predeceased by Helen (Jones) LaFazia, his
20 sister, Dorothy Danella, and his daughter-in-law, Dale Dwyer; and

21 WHEREAS, Even though we are all diminished by the passing of this great man, we
22 draw comfort from the fact that Raymond LaFazia left a significant mark on the state. Ray will
23 surely live on in the memories of all those who were touched throughout the course of his
24 extraordinary life; now, therefore be it

25 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
26 hereby expresses its deepest sympathy on the passing of Raymond A. LaFazia. He will be
27 sincerely missed; and be it further

28 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to
29 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to Mrs. Ellen LaFazia and Family.

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