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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020**

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**SENATE RESOLUTION**

**EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF THE HONORABLE SUPERIOR  
COURT JUSTICE, JOHN E. ORTON, III**

Introduced By: Senators Ruggerio, McCaffrey, Goodwin, Algieri, and Conley

Date Introduced: January 15, 2020

Referred To: Placed on the Senate Consent Calendar

1           WHEREAS, It is with great sadness that this Senate has learned of the passing of the  
2 Honorable Justice John E. Orton, III. Judge Orton was the son of the late John E. Jr., and Irene  
3 Orton. He was the loving husband of the late Sabra Orton. He leaves behind his wife Denise  
4 Orton. Judge Orton was a graduate of Cranston High School, where he was the Class President,  
5 the Cheshire Academy Class of 1950, Brown University in 1954, and the Boston University  
6 School of Law in 1962. He also served our nation with honor as a member of the United States  
7 Marine Corps and the United States Marine Corps Reserve. He excelled in athletics and was a  
8 distinguished member of both the Brown University and Marine Corps Football Teams; and

9           WHEREAS, Justice Orton was admitted to the Rhode Island Bar Association in 1962 and  
10 began his exemplary legal career by practicing law in Warwick and Providence with former  
11 Governor Philip Noel. In 1969, he was appointed to serve as an Associate Justice of the Rhode  
12 District Court by Governor Frank Licht and in 1974 he was appointed to serve as an Associate  
13 Justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court by Governor Noel. Judge Orton retired in 1991 as the  
14 Acting Presiding Justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court; and

15           WHEREAS, Judge Orton was a distinguished jurist who leaves behind a sterling record  
16 of tireless service and impeccable integrity. Judge Orton presided over many of Rhode Island's  
17 most important and complex cases. He was widely admired and respected by all involved in the  
18 legal process. Presiding Superior Court Justice Alice Gibney, in describing Judge Orton, said that  
19 "The joy of him was that he was a joy for lawyers to appear before because he was savvy, he was

1 efficient and he was decisive", and she went on to say about Judge Orton that "There was an  
2 everyman demeanor that made him popular with lawyers and with jurors"; and

3 WHEREAS, Judge Orton also was a devoted family man, a dear friend to many, and a  
4 role model to numerous aspiring lawyers. His passing is a tremendous loss to our state and his  
5 family and many friends, but his distinguished legacy will live on forever. Perhaps former  
6 Governor Philip Noel expressed it best when he said about Judge Orton "In all of my experience,  
7 he was the finest man I ever met"; and

8 WHEREAS, In addition to his wife Denise Orton, he also leaves behind his children,  
9 John W. Orton, Richard E. Orton and his wife, Karen, and Christopher Orton and his wife,  
10 Elizabeth. He was the stepfather of Karen Soderi and her husband, Paul, and Sheila Felice and her  
11 husband, John. He was the grandfather of Stephanie, Heather, Alexandra, Emma, Jackson,  
12 Calvin, Daniel, and Nicholas, and the great-grandfather of Gibson, Avery and Emma, and was the  
13 brother of Joyce Vanderwart. Judge Orton is also survived by many nieces, nephews, and good  
14 friends; now, therefore be it

15 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
16 hereby expresses its deepest condolences to the Orton Family on the passing of the Honorable  
17 John E. Orton, III, Retired Justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
19 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Mrs. Denise Orton and Family.

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