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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2025

HOUSE RESOLUTION

EXTENDING CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF GRETCHEN DOW SIMPSON, A
HIGHLY ACCLAIMED ARTIST WHOSE PAINTINGS GRACED MYRIAD NEW YORKER
COVERS

Introduced By: Representatives Shekarchi, Blazejewski, Ajello, Chippendale, Shallcross
Smith, Read, Solomon, Fellela, and Boylan

Date Introduced: April 29, 2025

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, It is with sadness that this House has learned of the passing of Gretchen
2 Dow Simpson, the beloved wife of James Baird, Ph.D., the mother of Phoebe Appleton Simpson
3 Bean and her husband, John, and Megan Sagendorph Simpson Wolff, and the cherished
4 grandmother of Ruby Dow Wolff, Oscar Wolff, Ezra Appleton Bean, and João Bean; and

5 WHEREAS, Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Mrs. Simpson was a daughter of
6 Richard Appleton Dow, Sr. and Elizabeth Sagendorph Dow, and the sister of Bettyna Dow
7 Donelson, Pamela Dow Brown, and Richard Appleton Dow. She attended Beaver Country Day
8 School, and later studied painting at the Rhode Island School of Design; and

9 WHEREAS, In 1964, Mrs. Simpson moved to New York City, where she embarked on a
10 career as a young artist, designing Papier Mache jewelry that was unique enough to be featured in
11 a 12-page Vogue Magazine spread. She eventually became best known for her "precise, light-
12 filled compositions of New England clapboard houses, stairwells, and seascapes." The uniqueness
13 of her work, "rooted in clarity, quietude, and atmosphere", soon became instantly recognizable;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, By 1974, Mrs. Simpson had earned her first New Yorker cover, which thus
16 began a two-decade collaboration that brought her art into millions of homes across the country.
17 She was also commissioned by The Atlantic, New York Magazine, The Bostonian, Random
18 House, and The Book of the Month Club, and in 1993, her work was featured in Absolut Vodka's
19 iconic ad campaign on the back cover of The New Yorker. Her work is now exhibited in the

1 permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Fine
2 Arts Museums of San Francisco, the RISD Museum, and many more; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1987, Mrs. Simpson moved to the City of Providence where she soon
4 became an active and contributing person in the City's art scene, mentoring many young artists,
5 supporting Trinity Rep, The Gamm, and Second Story, and also serving on the board of the
6 Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, and as a founding member of the Pawtucket Arts
7 Collaborative; and

8 WHEREAS, In 2012, Mrs. Simpson completed a 1,400-square-foot mural of six illusory
9 factory windows on I-95 in Pawtucket, which greeted travelers into the State with "a simple and
10 elegant welcome" and extended her artistic prowess beyond galleries and magazines and into the
11 lives of the everyday man; and

12 WHEREAS, Those fortunate to be welcomed into her home, were witness to the alternate
13 side of Mrs. Simpson's artistic talents, with a large framed photograph of a young couple leaning
14 against a motorcycle in a passionate embrace, and those fortunate to be part of her vibrant life
15 were gifted with memories, both visual and sentimental, that are true and everlasting gifts; now,
16 therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
18 extends deepest sympathy and condolences on the passing of Gretchen Dow Simpson; and be it
19 further

20 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
21 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to James Baird, Ph.D. and Family.

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