

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 14—Senators Porter, Amodei, Care, Carlton, Coffin, Jacobsen, James, Mathews, McGinness, Neal, O’Connell, O’Donnell, Raggio, Rawson, Rhoads, Schneider, Shaffer, Titus, Townsend, Washington and Wiener

Joint Sponsors: Assemblymen Brown, Anderson, Angle, Arberry, Bache, Beers, Berman, Brower, Buckley, Carpenter, Cegavske, Chowning, Claborn, Collins, de Braga, Dini, Freeman, Gibbons, Giunchigliani, Goldwater, Gustavson, Hettrick, Humke, Koivisto, Lee, Leslie, Manendo, Marvel, McClain, Mortenson, Neighbors, Nolan, Ocegüera, Ohrenschall, Parks, Parnell, Perkins, Price, Smith, Tiffany, Von Tobel and Williams

FILE NUMBER.....

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION—Commending Michele and John Laws for their work as advocates for abused and neglected children.

WHEREAS, The tragedy of child abuse and neglect is a worldwide problem of monumental proportions, with statistics showing that there are nearly 1 million reported incidents every year in our country alone; and

WHEREAS, Because an abused or neglected child was too often a voice unheard and a face unseen in our over-burdened court system, Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act in 1974, mandating the appointment of a guardian ad litem to serve as an advocate for victims in cases of child abuse and neglect; and

WHEREAS, In his search for such advocates to assist him in making more informed decisions, Judge David W. Soukup of Seattle, Washington, started a program in 1977 to recruit volunteers from the community to serve in the role of advocate; and

WHEREAS, Judge Soukup’s program developed into a nationwide association known as the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, commonly called CASA; and

WHEREAS, Michele and John Laws, a husband-and-wife team, are two loving, caring people who have dedicated themselves to rescuing abused and neglected children in Clark County through their support of the CASA program and the nurturing of foster children; and

WHEREAS, Michele, who became a CASA volunteer more than 10 years ago, after qualifying through background checks and participation in the 40 hours of required training, soon had both herself and her willing accomplice John enrolled in the classes requisite for becoming foster parents; and

WHEREAS, In her role as a CASA volunteer, Michele is assigned to one or two cases involving child abuse or neglect at a time and commits herself to serve a minimum of 2 years on each case; and

WHEREAS, As the advocate for a child, Michele’s responsibilities include conducting thorough research on the case, spending time with the child regularly, writing assessments, and appearing in court to speak on behalf of the child and his best interests; and

WHEREAS, Although Michele and John graciously give of their time, their lifework can extract an emotional toll that is overwhelming when they are involved with children who have broken bones or retarded development

and with children who horde food fearing that it might be taken from them or who sleep under their beds to feel safe; and

WHEREAS, The strain is intensified by knowing that “wonderful, flowery endings aren’t going to happen,” and Michele says that fact is probably the hardest thing she and John have to deal with; and

WHEREAS, Michele’s CASA Volunteer Coordinator, Betsey Sheldon, describes Michele as a person of vision and empathy who is “the most committed foster parent I know” and who “does not believe children are disposable, and does not throw them away”; and

WHEREAS, Betsey emphasizes that John is also an excellent foster parent and provides support for his family with good judgment and integrity as a “a full partner in this venture”; and

WHEREAS, Michele and John Laws were awarded the 1997 Judges Award for Foster Parents of the Year in Clark County because they have devoted themselves to cherishing children and sustaining those who, through no fault of their own, must overcome the scars of abuse and neglect; and

WHEREAS, Our society as a whole, and we as individuals, owe a debt of gratitude that can never be fully paid to Michele and John for the unselfish pledge they have made to keep children safe and to support them with the love and protection they need for the hope of a better tomorrow; and

WHEREAS, The dedication of this team is an inspiration to every child who comes into contact with them because their actions send the message “We will always be there for you”; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, THE ASSEMBLY CONCURRING, That the members of the 71st session of the Nevada Legislature commend Michele and John Laws for their loving care and heartfelt commitment to children who need someone to be there for them; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this Legislature recognizes the hope for a brighter tomorrow that is embodied in this couple; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate prepare and transmit a copy of this resolution to Michele and John Laws.