

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 45—SENATORS RAGGIO, AMODEI, CARE, CARLTON, COFFIN, JACOBSEN, JAMES, MATHEWS, MCGINNESS, NEAL, O’CONNELL, O’DONNELL, PORTER, RAWSON, RHOADS, SCHNEIDER, SHAFFER, TITUS, TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON AND WIENER

MAY 15, 2001

JOINT SPONSORS: ASSEMBLYMEN DINI, ANDERSON, ANGLE, ARBERRY, BACHE, BEERS, BERMAN, BROWER, BROWN, BUCKLEY, CARPENTER, CEGAVSKE, CHOWNING, CLABORN, COLLINS, DE BRAGA, FREEMAN, GIBBONS, GIUNCHIGLIANI, GOLDWATER, GUSTAVSON, HETTRICK, HUMKE, KOIVISTO, LEE, LESLIE, MANENDO, MARVEL, MCCLAIN, MORTENSON, NEIGHBORS, NOLAN, OCEGUERA, OHRENSCHALL, PARKS, PARNELL, PERKINS, PRICE, SMITH, TIFFANY, VON TOBEL AND WILLIAMS

Read and Adopted

SUMMARY—Memorializes award-winning author Robert Laxalt. (BDR R-1515)

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EXPLANATION – Matter in *bolded italics* is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION—Memorializing award-winning author Robert Laxalt.

- 1 WHEREAS, On March 23, 2001, Nevada residents, the Basque
2 community and the world of literature lost a friend, counselor and literary
3 genius with the death of Robert Laxalt, renowned Nevada author whose
4 books have won critical acclaim and awards throughout the United States,
5 the United Kingdom, Continental Europe and South America; and
6 WHEREAS, The son of Basque immigrants, Robert Laxalt was born
7 September 24, 1923, in Alturas, California, and grew up in Carson City,
8 where his mother, Therese, operated a boarding house, and in the
9 surrounding hills where he spent his childhood summers with his
10 shepherd father, Dominique; and
11 WHEREAS, Robert was called “Frenchy” by his family and friends and
12 was a natural welterweight boxer who loved boxing and whose fighting
13 spirit in the boxing ring was always faintly present in his writings; and
14 WHEREAS, Robert’s studies at Santa Clara University were interrupted
15 by World War II, but he graduated in 1947 from the University of Nevada,



1 Reno, with a degree in English, and it was during the years as a student in
2 Reno that he became a correspondent for the *Nevada State Journal* and
3 also contributed a regular Nevada history feature called "Tales Old-Timers
4 Tell," which became the basis for his first book published in 1950; and

5 WHEREAS, As with many of Robert Laxalt's life experiences, his
6 service during World War II in the American Foreign Service became the
7 subject of his novel, *A Private War: An American Code Officer in the*
8 *Belgian Congo*; and

9 WHEREAS, Although Robert enjoyed being a news reporter, he left his
10 job as a United Press correspondent when the company wanted him to
11 move to Mexico City or Los Angeles, and in 1954, he joined the University
12 of Nevada as the Director of News and Publications; and

13 WHEREAS, Understanding the difficulties encountered by Nevada
14 writers in getting works published and seeing a need to tell the stories of
15 these writers, Robert Laxalt founded the University of Nevada Press in
16 1961 and served as its Director until his retirement in 1983 when he was
17 designated Director Emeritus; and

18 WHEREAS, A professor at the Reynolds School of Journalism for over a
19 decade, Robert Laxalt was also a mentor to his students and his advice to
20 them, which describes his own life, was to "Take your writing seriously,
21 but don't take yourselves too seriously"; and

22 WHEREAS, *Sweet Promised Land*, Robert Laxalt's moving memoir of
23 his father's immigration to the American West, is considered an American
24 classic because of its universal themes of ethnic pride and struggle, and the
25 opening line, "My father was a sheepherder, and his home was the hills," is
26 credited with putting Nevada's Basque community on the map and helping
27 to launch the Basque Studies Program at the University of Nevada, Reno;
28 and

29 WHEREAS, Drawing on his Basque heritage as the inspiration for many
30 of his 17 books, Robert Laxalt emerged as the principal voice of Basques
31 in America and was one of the forces that led the University of Nevada,
32 Reno, to become the major center for Basque studies in America; and

33 WHEREAS, The love Robert Laxalt had for Nevada is evident in many of
34 the stories he wrote that are deeply rooted in Nevada soil and filled with
35 Nevada characters which he brought to life through his own unique,
36 compassionate and caring view of the world; and

37 WHEREAS, Described as soft-spoken, polite and self-effacing by those
38 who knew him, Robert Laxalt's priority was his family and he is survived
39 by his wife, Joyce, whose photographs illustrate his book, *The Land of My*
40 *Fathers: A Son's Return to the Basque Country*, by his son, Bruce, and
41 daughters, Monique Laxalt Urza and Kristin Laxalt Nomura, who
42 remember the rhythmic tapping of their father's trusty Royal typewriter as
43 the background music of their childhood home, by his grandchildren,
44 Gabriel, Alexandra, Amy and Kevin, and by his brothers, Paul, John and
45 Peter, and his sisters, Suzanne Laxalt and Marie Laxalt Bini, and several
46 nieces and nephews; now, therefore, be it

47 RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, THE ASSEMBLY
48 CONCURRING, That the members of the 71st session of the Nevada



1 Legislature hereby express their deepest sympathy to the family and
2 countless friends of Robert Laxalt; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That the sensitivity and insight that were an integral part of
4 Robert Laxalt will live forever in his books and will continue to inspire
5 readers to develop a profound appreciation of their own unique heritage;
6 and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That, on seeing the state flower, Nevadans may remember
8 with pride the comparison Robert Laxalt made when he wrote “How very
9 much like the sagebrush the people are, at least in the hinterland that makes
10 up most of Nevada, setting down roots and thriving in unlikely places,
11 hardy and resilient, stubborn and independent, restrained by environment
12 and yet able to grow free”; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate prepare and transmit a copy
14 of this resolution to Robert Laxalt’s loving wife, Joyce.

