

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

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, Oceguela, Ohrenschall, Parks, Parnell, Perkins, Price, Smith, Tiffany, Von Tobel and Williams

FILE NUMBER.....

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

WHEREAS, On March 23, 2001, Nevada residents, the Basque community and the world of literature lost a friend, counselor and literary genius with the death of Robert Laxalt, renowned Nevada author whose books have won critical acclaim and awards throughout the United States, the United Kingdom, Continental Europe and South America; and

WHEREAS, The son of Basque immigrants, Robert Laxalt was born September 24, 1923, in Alturas, California, and grew up in Carson City, where his mother, Therese, operated a boarding house, and in the surrounding hills where he spent his childhood summers with his sheepherder father, Dominique; and

WHEREAS, Robert was called “Frenchy” by his family and friends and was a natural welterweight boxer who loved boxing and whose fighting spirit in the boxing ring was always faintly present in his writings; and

WHEREAS, Robert’s studies at Santa Clara University were interrupted by World War II, but he graduated in 1947 from the University of Nevada, Reno, with a degree in English, and it was during the years as a student in Reno that he became a correspondent for the *Nevada State Journal* and also contributed a regular Nevada history feature called “Tales Old-Timers Tell,” which became the basis for his first book published in 1950; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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