

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 24—Assemblymen Chowning, Anderson, Andonov, Angle, Arberry, Atkinson, Beers, Brown, Buckley, Carpenter, Christensen, Claborn, Collins, Conklin, Geddes, Gibbons, Giunchigliani, Goicoechea, Goldwater, Grady, Griffin, Gustavson, Hardy, Hettrick, Horne, Knecht, Koivisto, Leslie, Mabey, Manendo, Marvel, McClain, McCleary, Mortenson, Ocegüera, Ohrenschall, Parks, Perkins, Pierce, Sherer, Weber and Williams

Joint Sponsors: Senators Carlton, Amodei, Care, Cegavske, Coffin, Hardy, Mathews, McGinness, Neal, Nolan, O’Connell, Raggio, Rawson, Rhoads, Schneider, Shaffer, Tiffany, Titus, Townsend, Washington and Wiener

FILE NUMBER.....

ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION—Memorializing casino visionary and philanthropist William Bennett.

WHEREAS, The members of the Nevada Legislature join the people of Nevada in mourning the loss of William Bennett, casino visionary and philanthropist, who passed away on December 22, 2002; and

WHEREAS, William Bennett was born November 16, 1924, in Glendale, Arizona, and after serving as a Navy dive-bomber pilot during World War II, William Bennett returned home to Arizona and built a chain of furniture stores which he sold in 1962; and

WHEREAS, Finding himself bankrupt when his investments were mismanaged by an investment company, William Bennett bounced back by using the opportunity to take his career in a different direction when he was hired by the Del Webb Corporation, an Arizona-based construction company that was expanding into casino operations, and took great pride in the fact that he eventually repaid all his creditors; and

WHEREAS, Transferring to the Sahara Tahoe in 1965, William Bennett worked as a casino host at night and in various hotel departments by day, learning the casino trade, and was quickly promoted to manager of the Sahara Tahoe and later of the Mint, reversing that casino’s trend of losing \$2 million annually to making \$9 million a year; and

WHEREAS, When William Bennett left Del Webb, he and long-standing business partner, Bill Pennington, formed a slot-machine leasing business and later leased the troubled Circus Circus in Las Vegas, exercising the option to buy in 1983; and

WHEREAS, In contrast to most of the glamorous, glitzy, high-rolling casinos in Las Vegas at that time, the new Circus Circus added another dimension to the city, making its target demographic the families of the Heartland of America, offering affordable rooms and meals and a family-friendly atmosphere with circus activities and arcades to entertain the children while keeping them out of the gaming area; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, Circus Circus Enterprises, under William Bennett's reign, opened the \$300 million Excalibur, followed by the opening of the \$375 million Luxor in 1993, and the purchase of the Sahara in 1995; and

WHEREAS, William Bennett, who had a longtime love of auto racing, and Ralph Engelstad, owner of the Imperial Palace, developed the \$200 million Las Vegas Motor Speedway, which brought in a new type of tourist, the race fan; and

WHEREAS, While William Bennett's marketing genius made him very successful, with *Forbes* magazine ranking him as one of America's richest men, he avoided the public spotlight and preferred to donate to various charities without seeking recognition, founding the Bennett Foundation to contribute to the needs of his community; and

WHEREAS, Much of William Bennett's generosity was directed at employees of rival casinos, such as when he supplied 3 meals a day 7 days a week for 5 years to striking workers of the Frontier and when he made a generous donation to an association of employees of the Aladdin after the casino was closed because of a management dispute; and

WHEREAS, William Bennett was instrumental in the building of the Temple Beth Shalom and, being an ardent animal rights activist, also gave his support to many animal rights groups; and

WHEREAS, William Bennett had a special place in his heart for education, donating more than \$10 million to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, to build the Lynn Bennett Early Childhood Development Center and the William G. Bennett Professional Development Building which will train teachers to better educate at-risk students; and

WHEREAS, William Bennett is survived by his wife Lynn, daughter Diana Bennett, son William A. Bennett of Las Vegas, stepdaughter Laura Lynn Lucia of Euless, Texas, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That the members of the 72nd Session of the Nevada Legislature offer their sincere condolences to the family and friends of William Bennett; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the effect of William Bennett's vision and generosity will be felt for generations to come; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly prepare and transmit a copy of this resolution to Lynn, the beloved wife of William Bennett.