

State of Michigan
State Board of Education

RESOLUTION

JAMES E. O'NEILL, JR.

WHEREAS, James E. O'Neill, Jr. served his country admirably as a soldier in the U.S. Army from 1951 to 1953, and his community graciously as a school teacher and administrator in the Hemlock Public Schools; and

WHEREAS, James E. O'Neill, Jr. was first elected to the Michigan House of Representatives in 1966, representing the Saginaw area; and

WHEREAS, during his years in the State House, James E. O'Neill, Jr., a lifelong Saginaw-area resident, served his constituents and the citizens of Michigan with distinction in the positions of Democratic Personnel Director, Democratic Majority Whip, and Associate Speaker Pro-Tempore; and

WHEREAS, as a state representative, James E. O'Neill, Jr. became well-known as a strong advocate and champion of K-12 public education, responding to detractors of his calls for equity of school funding with the following quote: "When you hear the old line that money will not buy a quality education, it's almost always someone from a wealthy district. But if you talk about anything that would limit their money, they don't want to hear it"; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, his last year in the Michigan Legislature, James E. O'Neill, Jr. helped to win bi-partisan support of Proposal A, which established per-pupil "student foundation" grants for every school district in Michigan, work which today is lauded by Democrats and Republicans alike as an innovative step toward improving equity among all state school districts; and

WHEREAS, James O'Neill, Jr. also was a major supporter of Saginaw Valley State University, and played a critical role in securing much needed state dollars for the college's expansion over the last decade; and

WHEREAS, despite vigorous disagreement throughout his career with key Republican party stances and initiatives, James E. O'Neill, Jr. cultivated friendships that transcended party lines, including with past Republican representative J. Michael Busch, former Senator Jon Cisky, and former Governor John M. Engler; and

WHEREAS, James E. O'Neill, Jr. concluded his highly respected service in the Michigan House of Representatives in 1994, when he announced his retirement, culminating a total of 28 consecutive years of devoted and exemplary service in the State Legislature; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education and the Michigan Department of Education were saddened to hear of the untimely death of James E. O'Neill, Jr. on December 31, 2002; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Michigan State Board of Education extends to the family of James E. O'Neill, Jr. its deepest sympathies, its highest regard, and heartfelt gratitude for the dedication and expertise this public servant brought to the children and citizens of the state of Michigan; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Michigan State Board of Education publicly states that other state legislators and policy makers follow the example of James E. O'Neill, Jr., as he strove to improve the lives of the people of Michigan.



Adopted January 23, 2003

Kathleen N. Straus, President

Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Chairman