



General Assembly

**Senate Joint
Resolution No. 45**

January Session, 2015

LCO No. 5032



Referred to Committee on NO COMMITTEE

Introduced by:

SEN. LOONEY, 11th Dist.
SEN. DUFF, 25th Dist.
SEN. WINFIELD, 10th Dist.
REP. DILLON, 92nd Dist.
REP. WALKER, 93rd Dist.

REP. PORTER, 94th Dist.
REP. CANDELARIA, 95th Dist.
REP. LEMAR, 96th Dist.
REP. MEGNA, 97th Dist.

**RESOLUTION EXPRESSING SYMPATHY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN T.
"JACK" DOWNEY.**

Resolved by this Assembly:

1 WHEREAS, on Monday, November 17, 2014, the State of
2 Connecticut lost a distinguished former member of its judiciary, as
3 well as an inspirational and heroic American, with the passing of John
4 T. "Jack" Downey at the age of eighty-four; and

5 WHEREAS, Jack was born on April 19, 1930, in Wallingford,
6 Connecticut, the first son of Probate Judge John E. Downey and Mary
7 V. O'Connell; and

8 WHEREAS, he graduated from Choate School in 1947, where he
9 was voted the "most popular, most versatile, and most likely to
10 succeed," and where he was inducted into the Choate Rosemary Hall
11 Athletic Hall of Fame in 2004; and

12 WHEREAS, he graduated from Yale University in 1951, where he
13 was a member of the football, wrestling and rugby teams, as well as
14 the Fraternal Order of Saint Anthony Hall; and

15 WHEREAS, he postponed plans to become a lawyer in order to
16 serve his country by joining the Central Intelligence Agency upon
17 graduation from college; and

18 WHEREAS, after six months of training, Jack was first assigned
19 overseas to aid in the United States' efforts during the Korean War and
20 was responsible for selecting, training and supervising a team of
21 agents tasked with operating within China's borders; and

22 WHEREAS, on November 29, 1952, he took part in an airborne
23 mission to extract one such agent from Manchuria; and

24 WHEREAS, during this airborne mission, his C-47 plane was
25 attacked by an ambush of anti-aircraft artillery and crashed, leaving
26 only Jack and fellow agent, Richard Fecteau, as survivors; and

27 WHEREAS, on the absence of the C-47's return from such mission,
28 the Central Intelligence Agency presumed that Jack was dead and
29 accordingly notified his family of such presumption; and

30 WHEREAS, he was, in fact, captured by the Chinese and taken to a
31 prison in Shenyang, where he endured extended periods of intense
32 interrogation and physical pain; and

33 WHEREAS, after five months of captivity in Shenyang, he was
34 moved to a prison in Beijing, where he was kept in solitary
35 confinement in a cement cell roughly measuring five feet by eight feet
36 and was subjected to sensory deprivation; and

37 WHEREAS, in November of 1954, two years after his capture, he
38 was tried before a Chinese military tribunal that declared him to be the
39 "arch-criminal of all American prisoners" and was sentenced to life
40 imprisonment, all of which was broadcast to the world by the Chinese

41 government-run news agency and in turn informed the Central
42 Intelligence Agency and Jack's family that he was still alive; and

43 WHEREAS, despite remaining in captivity for the foreseeable
44 future, he resolved not to feel sorry for himself and instead maintained
45 hope by adhering to a strict daily routine that included regular
46 exercise, teaching himself Russian and French and reading whatever
47 books and periodicals were made available by his captors; and

48 WHEREAS, the result of improving relations between the United
49 States and China, Premier Zhou Enlai agreed as a humanitarian
50 gesture of good will to release Jack to be with his ailing mother; and

51 WHEREAS, on March 12, 1973, after twenty years, three months
52 and fourteen days, making him the longest held prisoner of war in
53 American history, Jack Downey walked across the Wo Lu border
54 bridge from China to Hong Kong and would the next day be reunited
55 with his family in New Britain, Connecticut; and

56 WHEREAS, in the summer of 1973, he met Audrey Lee, a trained
57 chemist and researcher at Yale, who was born just miles from where
58 Jack was initially held in Shenyang, who emigrated with her family
59 from China shortly after his capture in 1952, who would ultimately
60 join him in marriage in May of 1975, and with whom he would have a
61 son, Jack Lee Downey, in 1980; and

62 WHEREAS, less than six months after his release from captivity, he
63 enrolled in Harvard Law School, from which he would graduate in
64 1976; and

65 WHEREAS, he passed the Connecticut Bar Exam and practiced
66 private law in Wallingford until 1978 when he was appointed by
67 Governor Ella T. Grasso as Secretary of Business Regulation and later
68 as Commissioner of the Public Utility Control Department; and

69 WHEREAS, his passion for public service led him to seek the
70 Democratic Party nominations for the office of Lieutenant Governor in

71 1978 and the office of United States Senator in 1982; and

72 WHEREAS, in 1987, Jack was appointed by Governor William A.
73 O'Neill as a judge of the Superior Court, and from 1990 to 1997,
74 inclusive, served as Chief Administrative Judge for Juvenile Matters;
75 and

76 WHEREAS, during his tenure on the bench, he displayed a
77 thoughtful, fair-minded, patient and compassionate approach to
78 difficult matters such as juvenile delinquency, family unity and care of
79 children; and

80 WHEREAS, his work and demeanor led efforts to rethink and
81 reform the juvenile system, including the introduction of mediation for
82 issues of parental rights termination, and helped to raise the quality of
83 lawyering and advocacy in juvenile matters; and

84 WHEREAS, in 1997, he elected to take senior status and continued
85 to serve on a part-time basis as a trial referee until early 2014; and

86 WHEREAS, in 2002, in honor of his tireless work on behalf of
87 children and families, the New Haven Juvenile Court and Detention
88 Center was named the John T. Downey Court for Juvenile Matters; and

89 WHEREAS, Jack received from the Central Intelligence Agency, in
90 1974, the Exceptional Service Medallion and the Distinguished
91 Intelligence Medal; in 1998, the Director's Medal for Service; in 2010,
92 the National Clandestine Service Medal; and in 2013, the Distinguished
93 Intelligence Cross, the agency's highest honor for valor; and

94 WHEREAS, in 2010, the Central Intelligence Agency commissioned
95 the documentary film, *Extraordinary Fidelity*, based upon the
96 experiences of Jack and Agent Fecteau in China, initially intended for
97 internal training purposes but eventually released to the public; and

98 WHEREAS, on September 22, 2014, in the Legislative Office
99 Building, he was inducted into the Connecticut Hall of Fame; and

100 WHEREAS, his service to his country, to his state and to the legal
101 profession garnered and will continue to garner him the respect and
102 admiration of his fellow jurists, colleagues in government and all
103 citizens having had the pleasure of meeting Jack Downey or learning
104 of his life; and

105 WHEREAS, Jack is survived by his wife of forty years, Audrey Lee
106 Downey, who always stood by his side, supported him completely and
107 unconditionally and cared for him during their time together; and

108 WHEREAS, Jack is further survived by his son and a professor of
109 religion at La Salle University, Jack Lee Downey of Philadelphia; and

110 WHEREAS, Jack is further survived by his brother, William F.
111 Downey of New York City; and

112 WHEREAS, having been predeceased by his sister, Joan Walsh of
113 Nashua, New Hampshire, Jack is further survived by his nieces, Mary
114 Pacheco, Sheila Walsh, Anne Walsh and Eileen Walsh and his nephew,
115 Daniel Walsh.

116 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Connecticut
117 General Assembly expresses its sincere sympathy and heartfelt
118 condolences on the passing of a distinguished former member of the
119 judiciary, and an inspirational and heroic American, John T. "Jack"
120 Downey, whose death is a profound loss to his family and friends, to
121 the legal profession, to public service, and to the people of both the
122 State of Connecticut and the United States of America; and

123 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the clerks of the Senate and the
124 House of Representatives cause a copy of this resolution to be sent to
125 the family of John T. "Jack" Downey as an expression of the high
126 esteem and affection in which he was held.