

HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 6026

A RESOLUTION honoring and recognizing the life and career of Representative J. Russell Jennings.

WHEREAS, Today, we recognize and honor the life and career of our deceased colleague, Representative J. Russell Jennings, familiarly known as Russ Jennings; and

WHEREAS, Russ grew up in Buffalo, New York, and, upon graduating high school, moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, to attend school for aviation mechanics; and

WHEREAS, Upon graduation with a degree in aviation mechanics, Russ began working as a mechanic and pilot in Johnson City, Kansas. He then volunteered with the Johnson City Police and Fire Departments and, as a result of his skills and strong work ethic, was hired as Kearny County Deputy Sheriff and, later, as Undersheriff of Kearny County. His time working in law enforcement distinguished him as a highly respected member of his community; and

WHEREAS, After serving as Deputy Sheriff and Undersheriff for a combined six years, Russ was appointed as Kearny County Magistrate Judge for the 25th Judicial District and remained in that position for 13 years. His work as a judge earned him the reputation of being fair, efficient and knowledgeable, so much so that he was recognized by the Supreme Court of Kansas, which frequently enlisted him to clean up its dockets and handle overload cases; and

WHEREAS, Upon retiring from his career as a judge, Russ began working in the field of juvenile justice, which would prove to be his lifelong passion. He was appointed by the Board of Finney County Commissioners as the Director of the Southwest Kansas Juvenile Detention Center, which was under construction at the time; and

WHEREAS, Russ dutifully oversaw the construction of the Center and worked as its Director for 13 years before moving to Topeka to serve as Commissioner of Juvenile Justice and work in the Cabinet of then Governor of Kansas Kathleen Sebelius; and

WHEREAS, Russ held his Commissioner and Cabinet member positions for four years, under two Kansas Governors, and oversaw all juvenile justice systems and all state juvenile justice corrections facilities in the State of Kansas. While serving in these roles, he developed a passion for the betterment of the state juvenile justice system; and

WHEREAS, Russ served on the Lakin City Council for eight years, from 1997 to 2005, before running in 2012 for Kansas State Representative for District 122. He won the seat and was retained concurrently as a contract consultant for Performance Based Standards of Braintree, Massachusetts. He also traveled the country to visit his assigned juvenile detention centers to ensure that operations of the facilities were correctly implementing performance-based standards. His work in overseeing detention centers across the United States earned him several national awards; and

WHEREAS, While serving as Representative for Kansas' 122nd District, Russ worked as the Chair of the Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee for five sessions prior to his passing; and

WHEREAS, Representative J. Russell Jennings passed away on October 27, 2021, while serving in his fifth term as a Kansas State Representative. He is survived by his family, whom he cherished and valued above all else: Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Kansas: That we recognize, honor and commemorate the life and career of Representative J. Russell Jennings, and we celebrate his dedication to family, community, public service and the improvement of the juvenile justice system in Kansas.

I hereby certify that the above RESOLUTION originated in the HOUSE, and was adopted by that body

Speaker of the House.

Chief Clerk of the House.