

# D R A F T

## SUMMARY

In memoriam: Vera Katz, 1933-2017.

### CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

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Whereas Vera Katz was born on August 3, 1933, in Dusseldorf, Germany, to Lazar and Raissa Pistrak; and

Whereas the Pistrak family left Germany for France when Vera was just two months old, and in 1940 they fled invading German armies for Spain on foot over the Pyrenees Mountains, a journey that ultimately led them to New York City; and

Whereas Vera Katz attended Brooklyn College, where she studied dance under the legendary Martha Graham and received a degree in sociology; and

Whereas Vera Katz and her husband, Mel Katz, moved to Portland, Oregon, in the early 1960s, where they raised their young son, Jesse; and

Whereas Vera Katz first became involved in politics as a volunteer in Robert F. Kennedy's 1968 presidential campaign; and

Whereas Vera Katz was elected in 1972 to the Oregon House of Representatives, where she represented the people of her Multnomah County district for two decades; and

Whereas Vera Katz joined with two other legendary Oregon politicians, Norma Paulus and Betty Roberts, to form the Legislative Assembly's first-ever Women's Caucus; and

Whereas in 1977, Vera Katz became the first woman in Oregon history to serve as chair of the Ways and Means Committee; and

Whereas Vera Katz was Speaker of the House of Representatives from

**NOTE:** Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter *[italic and bracketed]* is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1 1985 to 1990, becoming Oregon’s first female Speaker and just the second  
2 woman nationwide to serve in that capacity; and

3 Whereas during Vera Katz’s exceptional and historic career in the Leg-  
4 islative Assembly, she was instrumental in the passage of many pieces of  
5 major legislation, including measures related to school reform, gun control,  
6 public records, gender equality and gay rights; and

7 Whereas Vera Katz was elected mayor of Portland in 1992 and served  
8 three full terms in office; and

9 Whereas Vera Katz’s dozen years as mayor were a defining era in  
10 Portland’s history, as she led the city through a period of tremendous social  
11 change, growth and revitalization; and

12 Whereas as mayor, Vera Katz championed the arts and education, fought  
13 discrimination and celebrated diversity; and

14 Whereas Vera Katz, a TriMet user herself, was a tireless advocate for  
15 public transportation in Portland, leading the way to many lasting improve-  
16 ments, including the Portland Streetcar; and

17 Whereas Vera Katz’s legacy as mayor can be seen all over Portland’s  
18 urban landscape, from the Pearl District to South Waterfront to the  
19 Eastbank Esplanade that was named in her honor; and

20 Whereas Vera Katz was a fierce protector of the city she dearly loved,  
21 and she personally manned Portland’s sandbag brigade when the Willamette  
22 River swelled above flood stage in 1996; and

23 Whereas after leaving City Hall in 2005, Vera Katz remained very active  
24 in civic life, selflessly volunteering in the community and working for  
25 Gallatin Public Affairs; and

26 Whereas in the words of *The Oregonian*, Vera Katz “reshaped Portlanders’  
27 and Oregonians’ notions of what their city and state could look like”; and

28 Whereas Vera Katz faced life’s many obstacles, including her three bat-  
29 tles with cancer, with unstinting determination, courage and dignity; and

30 Whereas when an eighth-grade Vera Katz was asked for a school assign-  
31 ment what words she wanted to have put on her tombstone, her response

1 was, "She made a difference."; and

2 Whereas Vera Katz died peacefully at home on December 11, 2017; and

3 Whereas Vera Katz will be forever remembered as a pioneering and vi-  
4 sionary leader whose career of dedicated public service touched the lives of  
5 so many and left an indelible imprint on the State of Oregon and the City  
6 of Portland; now, therefore,

7 **Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:**

8 That we, the members of the Seventy-ninth Legislative Assembly, honor  
9 and celebrate the remarkable life and accomplishments of Vera Katz and  
10 express our gratitude for her contributions to the people of this state; and  
11 be it further

12 Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be presented to the family  
13 of Vera Katz as an expression of our sympathy and condolences.

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