

HCR 213 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Rules

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Meeting Dates: 2/13

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Recognizes and honors former Speaker of the House Vera Katz.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Former Speaker of the House and Mayor of Portland Vera Katz passed away in her home on December 11, 2017, after having made a difference.

Vera Katz was born in Germany in 1933. As a child she was forced to flee over the Pyrenees Mountains on foot into Spain before ultimately arriving in New York City. She moved to Portland in the 1960s with her husband Mel, and son, Jesse. First elected in 1972 to the Oregon House of Representatives, she joined with Betty Roberts and Norma Paulus to form the Legislative Assembly's first ever Women's Caucus. She was the first woman in Oregon's history to chair the Ways and Means Committee in 1977, and in 1985 she became the first woman to serve as Speaker of the House. While in the legislature she was known for bold thinking, eye for detail, and incredible toughness. Her leadership led to major legislation regarding school reform, firearms, and civil rights.

She became Portland's mayor in 1992, and would serve three terms in that office. She led the city through a period of change and growth. Portland Streetcar, the Pearl District, and Eastbank Esplanade are just a few of the projects that she championed. Facing possible flooding in February 1996, she along with other Portlanders reinforced a mile of seawall at Tom McCall Waterfront Park with sandbags and plywood. Even the Willamette knew the futility of trying to best her, and the river didn't seek to test Vera's Wall. As she did her entire life, Vera Katz defended the people, city, and state she loved so much.