

## SCR 36 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### House Committee On Rules

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**Prepared By:** Josh Nasbe, Counsel

**Meeting Dates:** 6/13, 6/17

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#### **WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

Honors the life and extraordinary accomplishments of George Kenneth "Ken" Austin Jr.

#### **ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

#### **EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:**

No amendment.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

George Kenneth "Ken" Austin Jr. was born into a pioneering Oregon family and was himself a pioneer, blazing a trail that touched countless lives and left an indelible imprint on Oregon State University, the City of Newberg, Yamhill County, and the State of Oregon that will last long after his passing.

Ken Austin Jr. was born on October 29, 1931, in Missoula, Montana, where his father was working at the time. Ken Austin's ancestors arrived in Oregon in 1859, and his family returned to Oregon when he was two years old, settling on a farm in St. Paul. From an early age Ken Austin showed curiosity and ingenuity, tinkering with old appliances and constructing bird houses. In high school Ken Austin fell in love with cars, and he enjoyed racing them as well as earning spending money by doing custom repair work in a shop he built himself and called "The Rod Shop." Ken Austin went on to attend Oregon State College (now Oregon State University), where he brought the mascot Benny Beaver to life for the first time in 1952, sparking school spirit for generations to come. In 1953, Ken and Joan Austin were married, and they raised two children together and remained an inspiring couple until Joan's death in 2013.

Following his college graduation, Ken Austin served with honor and distinction in the United States Air Force from 1954 to 1957. In 1964, Ken and Joan Austin co-founded the Austin Dental Equipment Company (A-dec), and the young company's first space was a leased Quonset hut in downtown Newberg, Oregon. From those modest beginnings, A-dec has grown into a business with a 50-acre campus, one of the world's largest dental chair and equipment manufacturers, and a provider of family-wage jobs to thousands of Oregonians. Ken Austin preferred to think of himself as an "imagineer" rather than an engineer, and he had the rare gift of shaping whatever he had at hand into whatever the job required. This led to him being named on 40 U.S. patents and an additional 33 patents in other nations.

Ken Austin was a dedicated Oregon, gracious community and business leader, and selfless and magnanimous philanthropist. He supported countless nonprofit organizations in Newberg and throughout Oregon, including the Chehalem Cultural Center, the Oregon Symphony, and the Oregon Historical Society. But he had a special place in his heart for Special Olympic athletes and he supplied the funding necessary to state the Special Olympics Oregon summer games in Newberg for six years, providing unforgettable experiences and joy to Oregonians with intellectual disabilities and their families. As part of his 50-year membership to Rotary International, he established the Rota-Dent program, which provides portable dental equipment to charitable organizations working with underserved populations around the world, bringing dental services to thousands of people who otherwise would not have access to such care. Ken Austin will forever be remembered as a passionate inventor, the owner of a global business, a generous philanthropist, a noted civic leader, a champion for young people and

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the less fortunate, and an inspiration to all Oregonians.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 36 honors the life and extraordinary accomplishments of George Kenneth “Ken” Austin Jr. and his contributions to the people of this state.