

Enrolled
Senate Concurrent Resolution 36

Sponsored by Senators THATCHER, JOHNSON, Representatives POST, NOBLE; Senator BOQUIST,
Representatives HAYDEN, MCLANE, NEARMAN

Whereas George Kenneth “Ken” Austin Jr. was born on October 29, 1931, in Missoula, Montana, where his father was working at the time; and

Whereas 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; and

Whereas Ken Austin showed curiosity and ingenuity at an early age, tinkering with old appliances and constructing birdhouses; and

Whereas 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”; and

Whereas Ken Austin attended Oregon State College (now Oregon State University, OSU), where he brought the mascot Benny Beaver to life for the first time in 1952, sparking school spirit for generations to come; and

Whereas Ken and Joan Austin were married in 1953, and they raised two children together and remained a couple until Joan’s death in 2013; and

Whereas following his college graduation, Ken Austin served with honor and distinction in the United States Air Force from 1954 to 1957; and

Whereas 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; and

Whereas from those modest beginnings, A-dec has grown into a business with a 50-acre campus and more than a thousand employees, and it is one of the world’s largest dental chair and equipment manufacturers; and

Whereas A-dec has provided family-wage jobs to thousands of Oregonians; and

Whereas 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; and

Whereas Ken Austin is named on 40 U.S. patents and an additional 33 patents in other nations; and

Whereas Ken Austin was a dedicated Oregonian, a gracious community and business leader and a selfless and magnanimous philanthropist; and

Whereas Ken Austin supported countless nonprofit organizations in Newberg and throughout Oregon, including the Chehalem Cultural Center, the Oregon Symphony, the Portland Art Museum, the Oregon Historical Society and Volunteers of America Oregon; and

Whereas Ken Austin had a special place in his heart for Special Olympics athletes, and he supplied the funding necessary to stage the Special Olympics Oregon summer games in Newberg for six years, providing unforgettable experiences and joy to Oregonians with intellectual disabilities and their families; and

Whereas Ken Austin assisted those dealing with addiction by founding the Springbrook Northwest drug and alcohol addiction treatment center; and

Whereas Ken Austin was a member of Rotary International for more than 50 years, and as part of that engagement 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; and

Whereas Ken Austin was a dedicated and generous supporter of learners and education at all levels, including Newberg area schools, George Fox University and his beloved alma mater, OSU; and

Whereas Ken and Joan Austin contributed significantly to the construction of Austin Hall, the state-of-the-art facility that houses the OSU College of Business; and

Whereas Ken and Joan Austin were instrumental in establishing OSU's Austin Family Business Program, which has helped hundreds of Oregon family businesses to succeed, as well as OSU's Austin Entrepreneurship Program (now Innovation Nation), which is one of the largest such programs in the United States and has enabled many young Oregonians to become the state's next generation of innovative and successful entrepreneurs; and

Whereas Ken and Joan Austin transformed the hospitality economy of Yamhill County through the construction of the Allison Inn & Spa in 2009; and

Whereas Ken and Joan Austin received numerous honors throughout their lives, including the Vollum Award for Lifetime Philanthropic Achievement from the Oregon and Southwest Washington Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals; and

Whereas in 1999, Ken Austin was elected to the National Academy of Engineering; and

Whereas in 2000, OSU honored Ken Austin with its E.B. Lemon Distinguished Alumni Award; and

Whereas Ken Austin served as president of Oregon 4-H and served as chair of the American Dental Trade Association; and

Whereas the Austin Family Foundation continues Ken and Joan Austin's work by supporting education and improving access to addiction and mental health services in Newberg and Yamhill County; and

Whereas Ken Austin passed away on May 1, 2019, at the age of 87; and

Whereas 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 the less fortunate and an inspiration to all Oregonians; and

Whereas Ken Austin 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; now, therefore,

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

That we, the members of the Eightieth Legislative Assembly, honor the life and extraordinary accomplishments of George Kenneth "Ken" Austin Jr., and we recognize and honor his contributions to the people of this state; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be presented to the family of Ken Austin as an expression of our sympathy and condolences.

Adopted by Senate June 5, 2019

Lori L. Brocker, Secretary of Senate

Peter Courtney, President of Senate

Adopted by House June 19, 2019

Tina Kotek, Speaker of House