

HCR 6 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Rules

Prepared By: Leslie Porter, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 5/13

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Honors and celebrates the life of Michael A. Gibbons (1943-2020) and expresses gratitude for his artistic and civic contributions to the people of this state.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Michael A. Gibbons, a self-described “poet with a paintbrush” was born in Portland, Oregon, on December 18, 1943, to Millard and Virginia Gibbons. He was proud to be a native-born Oregonian whose family is deeply rooted in the state with his mother’s descendants having arrived in Oregon by covered wagon in 1865. Gibbons began painting with oils while still in elementary school, and he attended Benson Polytechnic High School in Portland, Oregon. When Gibbons was just 16 years old, he became the youngest person invited to join the Oregon Society of Artists.

After graduating from high school and serving a three-year tour in the United States Air Force, Gibbons invested in a small manufacturing firm and worked as a designer of specialty automotive parts. At the age of 25, Gibbons left his job in Portland and relocated to the Oregon Coast to pursue painting full time.

Gibbons’ oil paintings of the Oregon coast and surrounding areas established his reputation for depicting the natural world with deep sensitivity and reverence. He became intimately familiar with the hills, meadows, estuaries and wildlife of the Yaquina River region, and his paintings show a penchant for the interplay of light and colors. Gibbons’ most meaningful art was created in and around the community he called home, but he visited many other places to gain additional inspiration, including Washington, California, Arizona, Florida, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, and Mexico.

The late United States Senator Mark Hatfield said of Gibbons: “This man has taken a land we all know and love and given it back to us in a form we can understand.” Gibbons was a member of the Oil Painters of America, Laguna Plein Air Painters Association, Allied Artists of America, Copley Society of Art, and Christians in the Visual Arts.

His work has been featured in dozens of exhibitions in the United States and Europe, the most recent being the “Yaquina Exhibition” at the LaSells Stewart Center at Oregon State University and Chehalem Cultural Center in Newberg. Two of Gibbons’ original oil paintings, “Arnold Creek Estuary” and “Don Gray Country,” are on display in the Governor’s official residence in Salem, Oregon.

Gibbons had a fondness for machinery and became proficient at painting industrial scenes, especially factories and ports, and he was commissioned by Gunderson Marine in Portland to depict the company’s barges and railcar facilities. Gibbons also painted the Georgia-Pacific containerboard mill on the Yaquina River in Toledo and his 1985 painting of the mill proved so popular that a framed print of it is given to retiring mill employees.

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In 1988, he married the former Judith “Judy” Mortenson, and their partnership transcended life, love, and art to become a true union of soul and spirit. Gibbons was a longtime resident and civic leader in Toledo, Oregon, and he was always intrigued by the town’s history and setting amid the naturally beautiful Yaquina River region, seeing Toledo as a place where art can flourish. Gibbons was also a member of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Newport and the Knights of Columbus.

Michael A. and Judy Gibbons’ tireless promotion of Toledo as a creative hub led to the creation of the Art Walk on Labor Day, which in 2018 celebrated 25 years of showcasing the work of artists who depict the area’s natural beauty. With his own hands, Gibbons restored the neglected complex of structures on Northeast Alder Street that became the focal point of Toledo’s unique artistic community. Gibbons also saved “The Vicarage,” next door to St. John’s Episcopal Church from dereliction in the 1980s and it became the Gibbons’ home and gallery.

Gibbons died on July 2, 2020, at his home in Toledo. He was honored with a U.S. Air Force flag ceremony and buried at Toledo’s historic pioneer cemetery. Gibbons is survived by his wife Judy Gibbons; four stepchildren, Vicky Ross, Michael Ross, Randy Ross, and Stephen Ross; a sister, Laurie Gibbons; a niece and nephew; seven grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

Gibbons was a remarkable painter and a proud Oregonian, and he will forever be remembered for his rich artistic and cultural legacy. House Concurrent Resolution 6 honors and celebrates the life of Michael A. Gibbons, and expresses gratitude for his artistic and civic contributions to the State of Oregon.