

2015-J3953

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION celebrating the life and accomplishments of Voice of the Buffalo Bills Van Miller

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to acknowledge outstanding sports announcers who distinguish themselves through their exceptional performance, attaining unprecedented success and the highest level of personal achievement; and

WHEREAS, It is with great sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Van Miller, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Van Miller, Voice of the Buffalo Bills and television sports anchor, died on Friday, July 17, 2015, in the Town of Tonawanda, New York, at the age of 87; and

WHEREAS, Van Miller will be remembered as the most versatile play-by-play man in Buffalo sports history, delivering unforgettable calls which became part of Western New York's sports history; and

WHEREAS, Born in Buffalo, New York's Millard Fillmore Hospital in 1927, Van Miller was raised by his mother, Esther, in Dunkirk, New York; and

WHEREAS, At the young age of 10, Van Miller was often found practicing his future craft in his backyard, pretending to announce University of Notre Dame football games; and

WHEREAS, Van Miller started his illustrious career in 1949, at a Dunkirk, New York, radio station, WFCB; a man of many talents, he covered many different genres such as wrestling, basketball, morning shows, farm shows, quiz shows, and music shows; and

WHEREAS, After serving in the United States Army for a short time, he worked a few more years in Dunkirk and then landed a job at WHLD-AM in Niagara Falls, New York; and

WHEREAS, Van Miller married his wife, Gloria, and together they raised their two children; he was then hired a few days later at WBEN radio and Channel 4, a position he held until 1998; and

WHEREAS, After Ralph Wilson bought the Buffalo Bills, his first general manager, Dick Gallagher, decided Van Miller would announce the games after WBEN got the rights; and

WHEREAS, As the Voice of the Buffalo Bills, Van Miller perhaps became best known for a signature call in which he explained "Fandemonium" breaking out after games in the Bills' glory days in the 1990s; he is also remembered for advising fans to "fasten your seatbelts" before every game and used the expression, "Do you believe?" after big moments in games; and

WHEREAS, An inductee of six Halls of Fame, Van Miller became the first local broadcaster to accept the Pete Rozelle Award at a Hall of Fame dinner before an audience of 4,000 in Canton, Ohio; and

WHEREAS, A natural storyteller, Van Miller's biography, FASTEN YOUR SEATBELTS: THE VAN MILLER STORY, written by Rob R. Thompson, had entertaining tales to tell about Van's attempts to imitate fabled broadcaster Bill Stern as a child, his influence on the early days of the Buffalo Bills and on local television, and his playful sense of humor; and

WHEREAS, In December of 2003, at the age 76, Van Miller proudly called his last Buffalo Bills game; throughout his illustrious tenure, he announced games for 37 seasons; and

WHEREAS, In addition to his invaluable role with the Buffalo Bills, Van Miller also did play-by-play for Buffalo Braves games in the National Basketball Association, and Niagara University basketball games, as well as University at Buffalo basketball games; and

WHEREAS, Moreover, Van Miller broadcast Buffalo Bisons baseball games during the days of the Boswell sisters, who were fictitious fans he invented to enliven his Bisons broadcasts in his early play-by-play days via ticker tape; and

WHEREAS, Van Miller is survived by his wife of 62 years, Gloria, his daughter, Cathy, and one son, Van, Jr., as well as three grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Van Miller leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Voice of the Buffalo Bills Van Miller; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Van Miller.