

2023-K104

Assembly Resolution No. 104

BY: M. of A. Gallagher

MOURNING the death of Irene Klementowicz,
distinguished citizen, environmentalist, and beloved
community hero

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to
citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavors
served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great
State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Irene Klementowicz of Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New York, died
on January 20, 2023, at the age of 94; and

WHEREAS, Born in the Bronx, New York on January 8, 1929, Irene
Klementowicz moved to Greenpoint, Brooklyn, where she and her husband
Leon raised their four children and established a family business in
1959; and

WHEREAS, Irene Klementowicz quickly immersed herself in the
Greenpoint community by becoming a trustee of the church and member of
the St. Anne's Society; and

WHEREAS, During this time, the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Greenpoint
and Williamsburg, New York were sites of heavy industry, including the
refinement and distribution of oil, manufacturing involving toxic
chemicals, and the transfer of waste throughout the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries; and

WHEREAS, In the 1960s, Irene Klementowicz noticed the black soot from a nearby incinerator that polluted the community's air, as well as the noxious fumes from a nearby chemical plant, and was motivated to mobilize a grassroots movement across the neighborhood to advocate for a cleaner and more healthful environment for the neighborhood's families and children; and

WHEREAS, Successful efforts to help the environment executed by Irene Klementowicz resulted in the closure of the Greenpoint incinerator in 1994, the upgrading of a sewage treatment plant, the removal of a sludge tank, the installation of pollution controls on exhaust stacks of chemical manufacturers, and zoning controls to appropriately site industrial activities at a safe distance from residential communities and schools; and

WHEREAS, The growing local environmentalist community organized by Irene Klementowicz fought back against Greenpoint's and Williamsburg's statuses as the New York City neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of waste transfer stations, airborne lead, and manufacturers storing or using toxic chemicals; and

WHEREAS, Continued devotion from Irene Klementowicz to create a robust environmentalist movement eventually resulted in successful legal action in 2007 against ExxonMobil and other large oil companies for spilling an estimated 30 million barrels of oil into Greenpoint and

Newtown Creek, and the declaration of such oil spill as a federal Superfund site; and

WHEREAS, Irene Klementowicz's dedication to environmental advocacy

laid the foundation for a safer and cleaner neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, and the surrounding communities which have been enjoyed by generations of residents in the decades since this courageous woman first began to organize for more sanitary community conditions; and

WHEREAS, Irene Klementowicz's infinite selflessness and benevolence will shine on through her family's vivid and happy memories; her insight and strength will forever serve as a beacon of love, light and hope to the countless lives she touched; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Irene Klementowicz leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all who were privileged to have known and loved such an amazing woman; she will be deeply missed and truly merits the grateful tribute of this Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Irene Klementowicz, and to express its deepest condolences to her family; and be it further

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