

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 966

By McKenzie

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Alexei Navalny.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Alexei Navalny; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Navalny was Russia's best-known campaigner against high-level corruption who, for more than a decade, led the political opposition to President Vladimir Putin while enduring arrests, assaults, and a near-fatal poisoning in 2020; and

WHEREAS, Alexei Navalny died in a remote Russian penal colony in the Arctic on February 16, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Navalny had been serving multiple sentences that would most likely have kept him in prison until at least 2031 on charges that his supporters say were largely fabricated in an effort to muzzle him; despite increasingly harsh conditions, including repeated stints in solitary confinement, he maintained a presence on social media, while members of his team continued to publish investigations into Russia's corrupt elite from exile; and

WHEREAS, born in Obninsk, Russia, on June 4, 1976, to Anatoly and Lyudmila Navalny, Alexei Navalny received a law degree from Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow in 1998 and an economics degree from the Financial University in 2001; and

WHEREAS, he worked as a real estate lawyer before going into politics, first gaining recognition as the author of a politically daring blog for small investors that exposed signs of theft and abuse inside some of Russia's giant state-owned companies; and

WHEREAS, social media outlets propelled Mr. Navalny's rise, and a breakthrough came in 2011, when he used social networking sites to promote street protests opposed to Mr. Putin's return to power for a third presidential term; the protests breathed new life into a struggling opposition, and he came to be seen as the movement's leader; and

WHEREAS, Alexei Navalny's support among the middle class—mostly in Moscow, where he ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 2013—brought a new type of politics to the country, one focused not on the difficulties of striking miners or an aloof intellectual class but on the bread-and-butter issues of the new capitalist era, such as protecting home equity and investments in stocks; and

WHEREAS, known for his innovative tactics in fighting corruption and promoting democracy, Mr. Navalny defied expectations, cannily using street politics and social media to build a persistent opposition movement, even after much of the independent news media in Russia was silenced and other critics were driven into exile or killed in unsolved murders; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, Mr. Navalny announced he would run against Putin in the 2018 presidential contest but was barred by Russia's central election commission due to a prior criminal conviction; more arrests and repression followed; and

WHEREAS, Alexei Navalny was attacked with a spray in 2017, leaving him partially blind in one eye; in 2019, he fell ill in prison, from what he claimed was poison; and

WHEREAS, on August 20, 2020, Mr. Navalny became violently ill and fell into a coma shortly after boarding a flight from Siberia, where he had met with opposition candidates for local office; he was eventually evacuated to Berlin, Germany, for medical care, whereupon doctors announced that he had been poisoned with a nerve agent from the highly potent Novichok family of toxins developed during the Soviet Era; and

WHEREAS, showing great courage, but defying the advice of his family and friends, he flew back to Moscow in January 2021, accompanied by his wife and dozens of journalists, and was arrested upon landing; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, Mr. Navalny was sentenced to an additional nine years in prison after being found guilty of embezzlement and contempt of court; in 2023, he was given a further nineteen years in prison on extremism charges and was later transferred to the isolated penal colony at Kharp, north of the Arctic Circle, where he suffered ill health for months and died; and

WHEREAS, Alexei Navalny is survived by his beloved wife of twenty-three years, Yulia Navalnaya; their children, Daria and Zakhar; his brother, Oleg Navalny; and his parents; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should remember this inspiring advocate for freedom and reform who chose state captivity in 2021 over a life in exile; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Alexei Navalny, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and indefatigable service in the cause of freedom.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Navalny.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.