

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1384

By Vital

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Sybil McLain-Topel of Chattanooga.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Sybil McLain-Topel, a dedicated professional of many talents and passions and a loving wife and mother; and

WHEREAS, born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Sybil McLain was a military brat whose father, the late Max McLain, served in the U.S. Army; the family had lived in seven states when Sybil began high school in Morristown; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure as a student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK), Sybil McLain-Topel spent two summers working in France, and speaking and learning about French became her passion; she later studied international relations in Geneva, Switzerland, through a Rotary Foundation scholarship; and

WHEREAS, after earning a degree in communications from UTK, she began her career in Nashville as a reporter and editor for United Press International (UPI) and interviewed singer/songwriter Jimmy Buffett while working for UPI; and

WHEREAS, while living in Nashville more than twenty years, Sybil McLain-Topel worked as a consultant, providing training in communications and presentation skills for FedEx, AIG, Alcan, and several healthcare clients; she later led branding and digital communications for Street Dixon Rick Architecture; and

WHEREAS, believing strongly in the value of moving communities forward through civic and professional leadership, she served as president of CABLE, a Nashville-based business networking organization with more than 500 members, and the Nashville Chapter of the Society of Marketing Professional Services; and

WHEREAS, an active member of the Public Relations Society of America while living in Nashville, Ms. McLain-Topel served on its board of directors and volunteered with the Girl

Scouts, Cheekwood, and WPLN; her leadership at AT&T in raising funds for the United Way resulted in her receipt of the Ingram Award; and

WHEREAS, Sylvia McLain met her future husband, Chris Topel, while traveling to Park City, Utah, for a ski vacation; on the third day of the trip, Chris came to Sylvia's assistance after she was involved in a serious accident on the slopes; and

WHEREAS, thankfully, no bones were broken, and Sylvia and Chris quickly became a couple after they discovered their shared love of travel and new adventures; and

WHEREAS, a year after the skiing accident, Chris and Sylvia were married at Second Presbyterian Church in Nashville, although they soon departed for Atlanta, Georgia, so that she could pursue a master's degree in writing, which she regarded as her calling; and

WHEREAS, Sybil McLain-Topel completed her Master of Fine Arts degree in Writing at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Atlanta in 2014; she was later awarded several writers' residencies in Clayton, Georgia, by the Lillian E. Smith Center; and

WHEREAS, Sylvia McLain-Topel and Chris Topel next moved to Chattanooga, where she wrote regularly for an international career blog based in Singapore, interviewing international executives from London, Hong Kong, Singapore, and St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, Sybil McLain-Topel then worked for more than ten years as Vice President of Marketing and Engagement for the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce; she also served on the boards of ArtsBuild, the Pop-Up-Project, and Co.Lab and was active in Rotary International; and

WHEREAS, renowned as a great listener, she found immense pleasure in helping her colleagues identify the skills they needed for advancement in their work, and she was a quiet, but fierce, advocate for equal pay; and

WHEREAS, Sybil McLain-Topel is survived by her husband of more than twelve years, Christopher Topel; mother, Mollie R. Vannoy; son, Alexander M. (Caroline) Douthat; brother, Bill McLain; and dozens of cousins, aunts, and uncles; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we memorialize this multi-talented individual who will be greatly missed by her family, friends, and colleagues; 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 Sybil McLain-Topel, reflecting fondly upon her many professional and civic accomplishments and her zest for living life to the fullest.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Sybil McLain-Topel.

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.