

Senate Resolution 12EX

By: Senators Orrock of the 36th, Butler of the 55th, Harrell of the 40th, Halpern of the 39th, Jordan of the 6th and others

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Honoring the life and memory of Marjorie Fine Knowles; and for other purposes.
- 2 WHEREAS, the first female dean of a Georgia law school and a nationally recognized
3 advocate for women's rights, Marjorie Fine Knowles passed away on September 24, 2021;
4 and
- 5 WHEREAS, a native of New York City and an honors graduate of both Harvard Law School
6 and Smith College, Marjorie Fine Knowles was one of the first female lawyers to work as
7 an assistant United States attorney in the Southern District of New York; and
- 8 WHEREAS, in 1970, she became the executive director of Joint Foundation Support, a small
9 nonprofit that coordinated the philanthropy of several Jewish families, and eventually met
10 Ralph Knowles, a civil rights attorney whom she married in 1972; and
- 11 WHEREAS, Marjorie Fine Knowles was one of the first women to join the faculty of the
12 University of Alabama School of Law, serving as a leading advocate and role model for
13 women and women's rights at the school, throughout the campus, and across the State of
14 Georgia; and

15 WHEREAS, her efforts led to the enrollment of female law students increasing from 13 to
16 more than 70 in three years, and she helped teach the university's first women's studies
17 course and create the university's academic major in women's studies; and

18 WHEREAS, in 1986, she moved to Atlanta when she became dean of the Georgia State
19 University (GSU) College of Law, and her appointment made her the 17th woman in the
20 history of the United States to serve as dean of a recognized law school; and

21 WHEREAS, over a period of five years, Marjorie Fine Knowles led the law school to
22 become a major institution in legal education; during her deanship, the GSU College of Law
23 gained accreditation from the American Bar Association and began educating an unmatched
24 number of women and African American students; and

25 WHEREAS, she further served on the board of the GSU Foundation and was an advisor to
26 the California Public Employees' Retirement System; her expertise in governance led to her
27 service on the City of Atlanta's first ethics board and to a federal court appointment to the
28 task force monitoring the implementation of the settlement agreement in a major race
29 discrimination lawsuit involving Coca-Cola; and

30 WHEREAS, Marjorie Fine Knowles retired from teaching in 2011 but continued to support
31 and advise feminist leaders; women's causes; liberal groups; and the GSU College of Law,
32 which now includes the Marjorie and Ralph Knowles Conference Center; and

33 WHEREAS, Marjorie Fine Knowles and Ralph Knowles were incredible people, but together
34 they were a powerhouse couple who devoted themselves to justice and equality in the world;
35 and

36 WHEREAS, Marjorie Fine Knowles is survived by her sister, Carolyn Fine-Clementi; two
37 sisters-in-law, Cheryl Knowles and Sue Stacy; as well as seven nieces and nephews and their
38 families; and

39 WHEREAS, she was preceded in death by her husband, Ralph, and her parents, Jesse J. Fine
40 and Roslyn L. Fine of New York City.

41 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
42 honor the life and memory of Marjorie Fine Knowles and express their most sincere regret
43 at her passing.

44 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
45 to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to the family of
46 Marjorie Fine Knowles.