

SENATE RESOLUTION

8705

By Senators Frockt and Wagoner

1       WHEREAS, Justice Rosselle Pekelis, a champion for equality and  
2 civil rights, who dedicated her professional life to serving with  
3 impartiality and care as a judge on multiple courts of our state's  
4 judicial branch, passed away on December 9, 2019, surrounded by  
5 family; and

6       WHEREAS, Her childhood spent in hiding from Nazis taught her the  
7 dangers of prejudice and discrimination, lessons that informed her  
8 adult life after she and her family escaped Europe and arrived safely  
9 in New York; and

10       WHEREAS, She decided to pursue law school at the University of  
11 Missouri after devoting a decade to raising her three children,  
12 overcoming societal resistance to the idea of a mother practicing law  
13 at the highest level; and

14       WHEREAS, She moved her family to Seattle to follow her dreams and  
15 began working for the law firm MacDonald Hoague & Bayless, and later  
16 Helsell, Fetterman, Martin, Todd & Hokanson; and

17       WHEREAS, She was appointed to the King County Superior Court by  
18 Governor Dixy Lee Ray in 1981, and was appointed to the Court of  
19 Appeals by Governor Booth Gardner in 1986, where she issued an  
20 opinion that women could not be excused from juries solely based on  
21 their gender, cementing her status as a trailblazer for women in law;  
22 and

1           WHEREAS, In 1995, she became just the fourth woman justice  
2 and the second Jewish member to serve on the state Supreme  
3 Court, where she was regarded with wide respect throughout the  
4 legal community for her intelligence and even application of the  
5 law in a wide variety of cases; and

6           WHEREAS, She pushed boundaries for the benefit of all women,  
7 showing that regardless of gender, age, or background, what  
8 matters is the competence you bring to the bench; and

9           WHEREAS, In her retirement from the Court, she and other  
10 former Washington state Superior Court Judges founded Judicial  
11 Dispute Resolution so they could continue to provide highly  
12 qualified mediation and arbitration services to Washington  
13 citizens; and

14           WHEREAS, Judicial Dispute Resolution is to this day a  
15 successful business, and has donated generously to charity since  
16 its inception, demonstrating the values of its founders; and

17           WHEREAS, She is survived by her husband, Frank Retman, six  
18 children, Melissa Standish, Alex Higgins, Jenny Zavatsky, Zach  
19 Pekelis Jones, Sonnet Retman, Mischa Retman, and ten  
20 grandchildren;

21           NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Senate recognize  
22 and honor the distinguished life and public service of Justice  
23 Rosselle Pekelis; and

24           BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be  
25 immediately transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to  
26 members of Justice Pekelis' immediate family.

27 I, Brad Hendrickson, Secretary of the Senate,  
28 do hereby certify that this is a true and  
29 correct copy of Senate Resolution 8705,  
30 adopted by the Senate  
31 March 4, 2020

32 BRAD HENDRICKSON  
33 Secretary of the Senate