HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 2023-4625, by Representatives Wilcox and Lekanoff

WHEREAS, Billy Frank Jr. was born March 9, 1931, to Willie Sr. and Angeline Frank. Frank Jr., a member of the Nisqually Tribe, grew up on six acres along the banks of the Nisqually River in Thurston County. Known as Frank's Landing, the property was purchased by Willie Frank after development of the Fort Lewis Army Base in 1917 drove the Nisqually people from their reservation; and

WHEREAS, Frank's formal education ended after he completed the ninth grade in Olympia, after which he worked in construction by day and fishing by night; and

WHEREAS, In 1952, at age 21, Frank fulfilled a dream to join the Marines, proudly serving in the Marine Corps for two years as an expert marksman; and

WHEREAS, Frank's father, Willie, and his predecessors, lived in a time of abundance, with strong salmon runs and plentiful clams, oysters, geoducks, wild berries, and camas roots. Frank was raised in the tradition of his ancestors, with stories of the land, the river, the salmon runs, and the art of preserving fish; and

WHEREAS, Binding promises made by the United States acknowledged, through treaties, the rights of tribes to take fish "at all usual and accustomed stations," and "in common with the citizens of the territory" of Washington; and

WHEREAS, These treaty rights were increasingly eroded during Frank's lifetime through commercial and recreational fishing by nontribal actors, and aggressive and unjust state and local policing of tribal fishing. Combined with expansive growth, construction, property development, and pollution further depleted the plentiful salmon and other natural resources which had traditionally sustained tribal people in Washington; and

WHEREAS, Frank began what became a lifetime of advocacy, leadership, and statesmanship in 1945, when he protested his arrest at age 14 by two game wardens, simply for fishing on the Nisqually River near his family's property. He would spend his lifetime challenging the state and nation to live up to its ideals; and

WHEREAS, By the mid 1960's Frank's Landing was a focal point for the assertion of treaty rights and tribal sovereignty. Over the next decade, Washington State would raid, arrest, and campaign against the fishing rights of Pacific Northwest tribes; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Frank led historic "fish-ins," demonstrations, and acts of civil resistance with other tribal and nontribal leaders, insisting on the treaty rights guaranteed more than a century before. In attempting to defend his treaty rights Frank was arrested numerous times; and

WHEREAS, Growing public awareness of the unjust infringement upon tribal treaty fishing rights in Washington ultimately resulted in the historic litigation and decision issued in *United States v. Washington*, in which the Honorable George Boldt recognized tribal treaty fishing rights as the supreme law of the land; and

WHEREAS, Following the Boldt decision, Frank's leadership, humility, and dedication to consensus-building cut through initial, blatant disregard of the decision by state and local authorities and citizens and the resulting hardship and anger that caused among the tribes; and

WHEREAS, Billy Frank Jr. resisted bitterness and confronted injustice in ways that built strength by bringing diverse groups of people with conflicting interests together; and

WHEREAS, At a time when he possessed the power to impose outcomes favoring one group at the expense of others, he remained steadfast in the fair and impartial defense of the rights of all landowners and natural resources businesses along the Nisqually River, earning the lasting goodwill of landowners in the Nisqually basin; and

WHEREAS, For more than 30 years, Frank served as Chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, created in 1975 to support the natural resource management activities of the 20 treaty Indian tribes in western Washington; and

WHEREAS, In March 2011, in honor of Frank's 80th birthday, the Billy Frank Jr. Salmon Forever Fund was established by Salmon Defense, "to honor and create permanence and action to the vision and work of Billy Frank Jr.;" and

WHEREAS, Over his lifetime Frank was honored with countless additional awards for his decades-long fight for justice and environmental preservation, including: The Common Cause Award for Human Rights Efforts, the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism, the American Indian Distinguished Service Award, the Wallace Stegner Award, the Washington State Environmental Excellence Award, and the 2015 Washington State Medal of Merit. In 2015, President Barack Obama named Frank Jr. posthumously as a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest official civilian honor; and

WHEREAS, Billy Frank Jr. died May 5, 2014, at the age of 83. Today, Chairman of the Nisqually Tribe Willie Frank III and his wife, Peggen, continue the work of both father and grandfather. A good life growing up at Frank's Landing instilled the dignity and respect that informed the principles and guidelines of their leadership. His family once said, "being with Billy is like floating on a steady, easy river. Billy's life is turbulent, but Billy is not. He's the happiest person I know. He's completely at peace with himself;" and

WHEREAS, In memory of what would have been Frank's 92nd birthday, we honor his vision to "tell your story, tell the truth, and stay the course" in the pursuit of community resilience and environmental stewardship. We reflect on the man known as an architect of consensus solutions. A man who brought previously contentious interest groups together, through genuine respect and endeavoring to heal wounds, and find resolution for the good of all people;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, By the Washington State House of Representatives, That we reflect in gratitude on Billy Frank Jr., the man who taught us that no victory can last until the opposing sides can come together in agreement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be forwarded to the family of Billy Frank Jr.

I hereby certify this to be a true and correct copy of

Resolution 4625 adopted by the House of Representatives

March 9, 2023

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Bernard Dean, Chief Clerk