

# House Concurrent Resolution 213

Sponsored by COMMITTEE ON RULES (at the request of Representative Jennifer Williamson)

## SUMMARY

The following summary is not prepared by the sponsors of the measure and is not a part of the body thereof subject to consideration by the Legislative Assembly. It is an editor's brief statement of the essential features of the measure **as introduced**.

In memoriam: Vera Katz, 1933-2017.

## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1  
2       Whereas Vera Katz was born on August 3, 1933, in Dusseldorf, Germany, to Lazar and Raissa  
3 Pistrak; and

4       Whereas the Pistrak family left Germany for France when Vera was just two months old, and  
5 in 1940 they fled invading German armies for Spain on foot over the Pyrenees Mountains, a journey  
6 that ultimately led them to New York City; and

7       Whereas Vera Katz attended Brooklyn College, where she studied dance under the legendary  
8 Martha Graham and received a degree in sociology; and

9       Whereas Vera Katz and her husband, Mel Katz, moved to Portland, Oregon, in the early 1960s,  
10 where they raised their young son, Jesse; and

11       Whereas Vera Katz first became involved in politics as a volunteer in Robert F. Kennedy's 1968  
12 presidential campaign; and

13       Whereas Vera Katz was elected in 1972 to the Oregon House of Representatives, where she re-  
14 presented the people of her Multnomah County district for two decades; and

15       Whereas Vera Katz joined with two other legendary Oregon politicians, Norma Paulus and  
16 Betty Roberts, to form the Legislative Assembly's first-ever Women's Caucus; and

17       Whereas in 1977, Vera Katz became the first woman in Oregon history to serve as chair of the  
18 Ways and Means Committee; and

19       Whereas Vera Katz was Speaker of the House of Representatives from 1985 to 1990, becoming  
20 Oregon's first female Speaker and just the second woman nationwide to serve in that capacity; and

21       Whereas during Vera Katz's exceptional and historic career in the Legislative Assembly, she  
22 was instrumental in the passage of many pieces of major legislation, including measures related to  
23 school reform, gun violence prevention, public records, gender equality and lesbian, gay, bisexual  
24 and transgender rights; and

25       Whereas Vera Katz was elected mayor of Portland in 1992 and served three full terms in office;  
26 and

27       Whereas Vera Katz's dozen years as mayor were a defining era in Portland's history, as she led  
28 the city through a period of tremendous social change, growth and revitalization; and

29       Whereas as mayor, Vera Katz championed the arts and education, fought discrimination and  
30 celebrated diversity; and

31       Whereas Vera Katz, a TriMet user herself, was a tireless advocate for public transportation in  
32 Portland, leading the way to many lasting improvements, including the Portland Streetcar; and

**NOTE:** Matter in **boldfaced** type in an amended section is new; matter [*italic and bracketed*] is existing law to be omitted. New sections are in **boldfaced** type.

1       Whereas Vera Katz’s legacy as mayor can be seen all over Portland’s urban landscape, from the  
2 Pearl District to South Waterfront to the Eastbank Esplanade that was named in her honor; and

3       Whereas Vera Katz was a fierce protector of the city she dearly loved, and she personally  
4 manned Portland’s sandbag brigade when the Willamette River swelled above flood stage in 1996;  
5 and

6       Whereas after leaving City Hall in 2005, Vera Katz remained very active in civic life, selflessly  
7 volunteering in the community and working for Gallatin Public Affairs; and

8       Whereas in the words of *The Oregonian*, Vera Katz “reshaped Portlanders’ and Oregonians’  
9 notions of what their city and state could look like”; and

10       Whereas Vera Katz faced life’s many obstacles, including her three battles with cancer, with  
11 unstinting determination, courage and dignity; and

12       Whereas when an eighth-grade Vera Katz was asked for a school assignment what words she  
13 wanted to have put on her tombstone, her response was, “She made a difference.”; and

14       Whereas Vera Katz died peacefully at home on December 11, 2017; and

15       Whereas Vera Katz will be forever remembered as a pioneering and visionary leader whose ca-  
16 reer of dedicated public service touched the lives of so many and left an indelible imprint on the  
17 State of Oregon and the City of Portland; now, therefore,

18 **Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:**

19       That we, the members of the Seventy-ninth Legislative Assembly, honor and celebrate the re-  
20 markable life and accomplishments of Vera Katz and express our gratitude for her contributions to  
21 the people of this state; and be it further

22       Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be presented to the family of Vera Katz as an  
23 expression of our sympathy and condolences.

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