



HR0705

LRB096 15048 GRL 30222 r

1

HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Lester
4 Thomas Pritchard of Urbana, who passed away on October 12,
5 2009; and

6 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard was born on September 25, 1949,
7 in Galesburg; he was the son of William and Barbara Bauer
8 Pritchard; he married Barbara Cotter on November 17, 1990, in
9 Urbana; and

10 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard graduated from the University of
11 Illinois and was a disability rights activist on the local,
12 State, and federal levels; he began his lifetime of activism in
13 his hometown of Galesburg, where his family ran a local
14 newspaper; while in Galesburg, he championed efforts to make
15 local businesses accessible and cut sidewalk curbs to street
16 level; and

17 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard's involvement in disability
18 issues began on the day he was born and diagnosed with cerebral
19 palsy, a point from which he experienced firsthand the struggle
20 for equality, dignity, and access; he devoted the past 30-plus
21 years as an advocate for independence, equal rights, and
22 opportunities for people with disabilities; he saw Illinois'

1 disability rights movement as a modern civil rights battle, a
2 vision that propelled him to create the Campaign for Real
3 Choice in Illinois, which seeks to advance the rights and
4 independence of people with disabilities so that they can
5 choose the lives they wish to lead; and

6 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard spent nearly as much time
7 rallying legislators in Springfield for a better system and
8 increased opportunities for people with developmental
9 disabilities as he did in his hometown of Urbana; in Urbana, he
10 helped pass a landmark ordinance requiring that homes built
11 with city money be accessible to people with disabilities; he
12 was also instrumental in the closing of the Howe Developmental
13 Center in Tinley Park, advocating tirelessly for years to close
14 the institution so its residents could have access to better
15 living conditions; and

16 WHEREAS, Of the countless advocacy efforts Lester
17 Pritchard led and the thousands of petitions he organized, each
18 was committed to expanding access to community living options
19 and empowering people with developmental disabilities; his
20 work was instrumental in keeping the Lincoln Developmental
21 Center closed; and

22 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard was appointed by Governor George
23 Ryan to the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities in

1 1999; in 2004, Governor Rod Blagojevich appointed him to serve
2 as Chairperson of the Council; as Chairperson of the Council,
3 Mr. Pritchard spearheaded research studies and moved the
4 Council toward a more central role in the development of
5 progressive services for people with developmental
6 disabilities; and

7 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard was regarded by many as a true
8 visionary; he saw a society that fully accepted and included
9 people with disabilities and he worked every day of his life to
10 make that vision a reality; never shying away from adversity,
11 he empowered hundreds of people with disabilities to map out
12 their goals, become contributing members of society, and find
13 fulfillment in life during his lifetime of advocacy; and

14 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard served as Vice-Chair on the Board
15 of Champaign County Healthcare Consumers; he was a board member
16 and board chair for P.A.C.E.; he served as a member of the
17 Urbana Human Relations Commission for 16 years; he was a
18 founding member of Citizens for HOMES, a group that advocates
19 for fair and equal housing options for people with disabilities
20 in Champaign-Urbana; he served as Chairperson of the Illinois
21 Accessible Affordable Housing Task Force; he was also a member
22 of the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois and
23 the Disability Rights Action Coalition for Housing; and

1 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard was the recipient of numerous
2 awards in recognition of his lifetime of dedicated service; he
3 was the recipient of the 2008 American Bar Association's Paul
4 G. Hearne Award for Disability Rights; he was given the 2007
5 James R. Burgess Sr. Humanitarian Award for furthering civil
6 rights from the Champaign County Board; he was the recipient of
7 the 2004 Illinois Justin Dart Distinguished Citizen Award from
8 the Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities; he was also the
9 recipient of the Edward T. Roberts Excellence in Independent
10 Living Award from the Illinois Network of Centers for
11 Independent Living; and

12 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard was preceded in death by his
13 parents; and

14 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard is survived by his wife, Barbara;
15 his sister, Sarah (David) Nielsen; his brothers, Bill
16 (Jennifer) Pritchard and John (Jane) Pritchard; his
17 stepbrother, Christopher (Regina) Pritchard; and his many
18 nieces and nephews; and

19 WHEREAS, Lester Pritchard will be remembered by all who
20 knew and loved him as a stalwart advocate for the equal rights
21 of people with disabilities whose dedication and integrity were
22 unmatched; therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
2 NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
3 mourn, along with his family and friends, the passing of Lester
4 Thomas Pritchard; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
6 presented to the family of Lester Pritchard as an expression of
7 our sympathy.