

House Resolution 111 - Introduced

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 111

BY BODEN

1 A Resolution honoring Phil Gray for his contribution to
2 aviation in the state of Iowa.

3 WHEREAS, Mr. Gray took his first balloon flight with
4 pilot Gene Dennis at the 1972 National Hot Air Balloon
5 Championship held in Indianola, and soon afterwards
6 helped form the Hawkeye Aerostation Society, LLC, a
7 10-member balloon club presided over by Mr. Gray, with
8 Mr. Gray being chosen by club members as the first
9 member to receive flight training; and

10 WHEREAS, Mr. Gray began flight training on
11 January 3, 1973, with Matt Wiederkehr, embarking
12 on a three-hour flight from Indianola to Alleman,
13 culminating with a high-wind landing on frozen
14 ground; and

15 WHEREAS, completing his first solo flight after
16 receiving only six hours of training, Mr. Gray piloted
17 his balloon by himself for two hours and 30 minutes
18 over central Minnesota; and

19 WHEREAS, Mr. Gray completed his "check ride" with
20 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) flight examiner
21 Lowell Sonquist, obtaining a commercial balloon license
22 on February 2, 1973; and

23 WHEREAS, during his "check ride", Mr. Gray made a
24 brief landing during which time the examiner exited
25 and his first student entered the balloon to fly for
26 his first time as pilot, while Mr. Gray flew as the
27 instructor; and

28 WHEREAS, in 1973, the same year he was certified as

1 both an FAA designated pilot examiner and an FAA safety
2 officer, Mr. Gray also began a certified aircraft
3 repair station that same year, and later became a
4 dealer for Raven Industries; and

5 WHEREAS, Mr. Gray began commercial pilot work in
6 1973 and continued such work for the past 50 years,
7 flying for multiple companies; and

8 WHEREAS, when he was not flying commercially, Mr.
9 Gray used his artistic talents to create commercial
10 signs for pilots and many ballooning events; and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. Gray helped form a race circuit for
12 balloon enthusiasts, giving pilots the opportunity to
13 race and receive meaningful prize money; and

14 WHEREAS, Mr. Gray was determined to achieve more
15 so he went on to manufacture his own balloon he named
16 "Azure"; and

17 WHEREAS, following the success of building his own
18 balloon "Azure", making its first maiden flight April
19 28, 1979, Mr. Gray and his wife, Linda Gray, began
20 their quest to manufacture a balloon based on his own
21 design, and on July 15, 1981, their company, National
22 Ballooning Ltd., received "type" certification from the
23 FAA; and

24 WHEREAS, after finalizing the manufacturing process
25 on July 22, 1982, National Ballooning Ltd. received an
26 FAA production certificate, becoming the only balloon
27 manufacturer in Iowa and the midwest; and

28 WHEREAS, always innovative, he constructed a special
29 basket with a door that had a large enough opening
30 for a person using a wheelchair to board a hot air

1 balloon, calling the balloon "Serena's Song", it
2 features a 60-foot-high wheelchair-accessible symbol
3 wearing a red heart on a solid blue balloon, and
4 on July 28, 1992, the balloon was issued a standard
5 airworthiness certificate, making it the world's
6 first wheelchair-accessible hot air balloon approved
7 by the FAA and the first aircraft that was designed,
8 built, and certified specifically for persons with
9 disabilities; and

10 WHEREAS, since 1982, Mr. Gray has continued to serve
11 as the CEO and chief engineer of National Ballooning
12 Ltd., the only FAA certified aircraft manufacturer in
13 Iowa, and continues to manufacture hot air balloons to
14 this day; and

15 WHEREAS, Mr. Gray was awarded the Wright Brothers'
16 Master Pilot Award for 50 years of safe flying,
17 becoming the only Iowa pilot to receive this award
18 for safe flight with a lighter-than-air aircraft
19 certificate, with all flight hours in a hot air
20 balloon; and

21 WHEREAS, Mr. Gray's passion for ballooning has
22 reached far beyond just the sport, hobby, or dream,
23 and has now ascended into aeronautical history; NOW
24 THEREFORE,

25 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, That
26 the House of Representatives honors Mr. Phil Gray, who
27 holds an excellent safety rating having reported zero
28 accidents, for his contributions to balloon aeronautics
29 and for his endeavors to make ballooning accessible and
30 memorable for all.