

Senate Resolution 337

By: Senators Parent of the 42nd, Butler of the 55th, Rahman of the 5th, Jones of the 10th, Dugan of the 30th and others

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Honoring the life and memory of Elliott Levitas; and for other purposes.
- 2 WHEREAS, the State of Georgia mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished citizens
3 with the passing of Elliott Levitas on December 16, 2022, at the age of 91; and
- 4 WHEREAS, Elliott Levitas was born in Atlanta, Georgia, to two immigrant parents from
5 Poland and Ireland in 1930; and
- 6 WHEREAS, he was a top graduate of Emory University and Emory University School of
7 Law in the 1950s and was also a Rhodes Scholar, earning a master of law degree in Oxford,
8 England; and
- 9 WHEREAS, he served as a captain in the United States Air Force as a judge advocate
10 general; and
- 11 WHEREAS, he was an accomplished trial lawyer who was involved in many high profile
12 cases, the most notable of which was *Cobell v. Salazar* which was a class action lawsuit on
13 behalf of Native Americans regarding the management by the Department of the Interior of
14 Native American property and trust rights which settled for an historic \$3.4 billion, the

15 largest class action award against the government in the history of the United States up to
16 that time; and

17 WHEREAS, Elliott Levitas served five consecutive terms as a member of the Georgia House
18 of Representatives before being elected to the United States House of Representatives from
19 the Fourth Congressional District in 1974, becoming the first Jewish congressman elected
20 from Georgia; and

21 WHEREAS, while serving in the General Assembly, he became a leading proponent of racial
22 justice and was instrumental in the creation of MARTA. He was never reluctant to stand on
23 principle when the time came as he cast a dissenting vote to the House's refusal to seat newly
24 elected representative Julian Bond, one of only five white representatives to do so, and vote
25 in favor of Howard "Bo" Callaway, a Republican, for governor when the candidate received
26 a majority of the vote in the race for governor and the House had to decide the issue; and

27 WHEREAS, in Congress, he was a leader on environmental issues and worked diligently in
28 creating and funding the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area as a national park;
29 and

30 WHEREAS, during his years of distinguished service in the General Assembly, in the United
31 States House of Representatives, and as an attorney, he was an acclaimed legislator and legal
32 icon with a stellar reputation that extended far beyond the State of Georgia; and

33 WHEREAS, his life was characterized by the quote by President John Adams: "Always stand
34 on principle...even if you stand alone"; and

35 WHEREAS, he was a well-read scholar with diverse interests from baseball to politics and
36 enjoyed lively discussions and thoughtful conversations on all topics but he did not allow for
37 detached commentary from the sideline. He expected one to wade into the discussions, take
38 a position, and defend it; and

39 WHEREAS, he well understood that it is not enough to be liked to be effective. He knew
40 that one must be respected and known to be a person of integrity as well to succeed; and

41 WHEREAS, he loved his family and provided them with many warm and wonderful
42 memories through the years with his stories and humor and his deep interest in their lives;
43 and

44 WHEREAS, he was united in love and marriage to his wife, Barbara, and was blessed with
45 three remarkable children, Karin, Susan, and Kevin, as well as six wonderful grandchildren,
46 Cydney, Mike, Alli, Aria, Elaiya, and Annie; and

47 WHEREAS, he was a person of magnanimous strengths with an unimpeachable reputation
48 for integrity, intelligence, fairness, and kindness, and by the example he made of his life, he
49 made this world a better place in which to live; and

50 WHEREAS, a compassionate and generous man, Elliott Levitas will long be remembered
51 for his love of family, friendship, and community and will be missed by all who had the great
52 fortune of knowing him.

53 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
54 join in honoring the life and memory of Elliott Levitas and express their deepest and most
55 sincere regret at his passing.

56 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
57 to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to the family of
58 Elliott Levitas.