

## HCR 13 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### House Committee On Rules

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**Prepared By:** Melissa Leoni, LPRO Analyst

**Meeting Dates:** 2/17

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#### **WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

The measure celebrates the life and accomplishments of Theodore Ralph Groener (1941-2022) and recognizes and honors his contributions to the people of Oregon.

Fiscal impact: No fiscal impact

Revenue impact: No revenue impact

#### **ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

#### **EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:**

No amendment.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Theodore Ralph Groener was born on December 25, 1941, in Oregon City, Oregon, to George Groner and Mary (McKee) Groner. Later in life, along with several other family members, Ralph changed his name from Groner to Groener to more accurately reflect the family's German ancestry.

After graduating from West Linn High School in 1960, Ralph Groener served his country with honor and distinction for four years in the United States Air Force (USAF). He was awarded the Airman's Medal—the USAF's highest noncombat award for heroism—after he risked his life to rescue three people from drowning after a boating accident.

Ralph Groener attended Portland Community College and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Oregon in 1969, remaining an avid Ducks fan for the rest of his life. While in college, he worked part-time at a local grocery store, and became a member of the retail clerks union. After graduating from college, he worked as a community organizer during the national War on Poverty, taking his first steps on a lifelong journey spent fighting for the underprivileged and for working families.

Ralph Groener followed in the footsteps of his uncle, Oregon state Senator Richard Groener, and embarked on a lifelong career involving politics. He was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives in 1972, where he served two very productive terms. In 1973, he was an original cosponsor of the first gay rights legislation to be introduced in the nation and was instrumental in the passage of Senate Bill 100 (1973), Oregon's landmark land conservation legislation, serving as the bill's carrier on the House floor.

Following his legislative service, Ralph Groener was elected Clackamas County commissioner, and he served two four-year terms on the commission. In 1978, he was defeated in his electoral bid to become Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industries. He served on the board of Clackamas Community College from 1971 to 1983. In 1990, Ralph Groener began a 30-year career as a political coordinator and lobbyist for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

Ralph Groener and his long-time colleague Mary Botkin were twice voted as the most effective lobby team by the Capitol Club of Oregon. For three decades, he was a beloved figure at the State Capitol and within AFSCME, known for his warmth and talkativeness. Ralph Groener was widely respected for his sharp political mind and strategic acumen, but he was also legendary for his huge laugh and incredible sense of humor.

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Ralph Groener retired from AFSCME in 2018, but he continued his passionate advocacy for the causes he believed in. Three times in his life Ralph Groener acted with great courage and decisiveness at crime scenes to foil perpetrators and save victims, each time earning the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association Award for Valor. His remarkable career was marked by dozens of other awards and honors.

Ralph Groener passed away on June 1, 2022. He was survived by his beloved wife of 55 years, Sharon; his daughter, Hilary; his son, Chris; his granddaughter, Cassidy Hedger; his great-grandsons, Colton Lee Hedger and Cayden Theodore Hedger; and many other family members, friends and colleagues who miss him dearly.

Ralph Groener will be forever remembered for his lifetime of dedicated public service and for the profound and lasting impact he had on the people of the State of Oregon.