



# Office of Chicago City Clerk



R2011-739

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## City Council Document Tracking Sheet

**Meeting Date:** 6/8/2011

**Sponsor(s):** Mayor Emanuel, Rahm

**Type:** Resolution

**Title:** Congratulations extended to decorated World War II veteran  
Louis Zamperini

**Committee(s) Assignment:**

SUSP.



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

RAHM EMANUEL  
MAYOR

June 8, 2011

TO THE HONORABLE, THE CITY COUNCIL  
OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I transmit herewith a congratulatory resolution regarding decorated World War II veteran Louie Zamperini.

Your favorable consideration of this resolution will be appreciated.

Very truly yours,

Mayor

# A resolution

adopted by *The City Council*  
of the *City of Chicago, Illinois*



Presented by MAYOR RAHM EMANUEL on JUNE 8, 2011

**Whereas** The Members of this Chamber are pleased to honor and congratulate Louis Zamperini, a true American hero and legendary World War II veteran, for his courageous and inspiring life; and

**WHEREAS** Born in Glean, New York, in 1917, Mr. Zampenni moved with his family to Torrance, California, in the 1920s. Growing up in then-tiny, blue-collar Torrance, Mr. Zampenni struggled with youthful misbehavior until he channeled his energy into competitive running, and he went on to set the interscholastic record for the mile and win a scholarship to the University of Southern California; and

**WHEREAS** At age 18, Mr. Zamperini qualified for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Germany, where he competed in the 5,000-meter race, and, two years later, he set the National collegiate mile record, which he held for 15 years; and

**WHEREAS** In September of 1941, Mr. Zamperini enlisted in the United States Army Air Forces. After completing his training, he was commissioned a second lieutenant and deployed to Hawaii as a master bombardier; and

**WHEREAS** On May 27, 1943, Mr. Zampenni and ten other crew members were on a mission to search for a lost plane and its crew when both port engines of their B-24 bomber failed, and their plane crashed into the trackless expanse of the Pacific ocean. Mr. Zamperini, Pilot Russell Allen Phillips, and tail gunner Francis McNamara were the only survivors; and

**WHEREAS** Mr. McNamara succumbed to death on the 33<sup>rd</sup> day at sea, leaving Messrs. Zampenni and Phillips huddled for a total of 47 days adrift in the ocean aboard a tiny, poorly provisioned raft, subsisting on little more than rain water and the blood of birds, they caught and killed barehanded, fending off circling sharks, and sometimes hanging below the raft to hide from enemy bullets; and

**WHEREAS**, After drifting some 2,000 miles west, the bullet-riddled, often patched raft washed ashore on the Marshall Islands, where Messrs. Zampenni and Phillips were taken prisoner by the Japanese; and

**WHEREAS**, For 25 months, Mr. Zampenni was subjected to unspeakable physical and psychological torture at the hands of Japanese prison guards. Beaten, starved, denied medical care, regularly whipped across the face with a belt buckle, and forced to perform demeaning acts, including push-ups atop pits of human excrement, the unflinching Mr. Zampenni never gave in to the demands of his captors and his spirit was never broken; and

**WHEREAS**, Liberated from his prison camp, Mr. Zampenni arrived at Long Beach, California, on October 5, 1945, where he was promoted to the rank of captain and awarded the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster, the Philippine Liberation Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and the American Campaign Medal with battle stars; and

**WHEREAS**, A recipient of honorary doctorate degrees from Azusa Pacific University and Bryant University, Mr. Zampenni was honored for his extraordinary sacrifice and resilience in his hometown, where the City's airport and a high school stadium were named after him; and

**WHEREAS**, A highly acclaimed athlete, in January 1998, for his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday, Mr. Zampenni ran a leg in the Olympic Torch relay for the Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan; in 2004, the entrance plaza at the University of Southern California was named Louis Zampenni Plaza; and in October 2008, he was inducted into the National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame in Chicago; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Zampenni co-authored two memoirs about his experiences, and he is also the subject of a New York Times bestseller biography, *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*, written by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Laura Hillenbrand; and

**WHEREAS**, A living American legend, Mr. Zampenni deserves our admiration and respect for his exceptional resolve, unbreakable spirit and proven valor, and his many contributions and service to our Nation are a source of great inspiration to all Chicagoans; now, therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this eighth day of June, 2011, do hereby express our sincere appreciation to Louis Zampenni for his courageous and extraordinary life, service and accomplishments; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to Louis Zampenni as a token of our esteem and good wishes.



Handwritten signature of Rahm Emanuel in cursive script.

MAYOR

Handwritten signature of Susanna A. Mendoza in cursive script.

CITY CLERK