



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

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SALUTE TO THE 89-YEAR HISTORY OF WLS-AIVI

WHEREAS, WLS-AM officially went on-the-air on April 12, 1924. The call letters stood for World's Largest Store, a moniker the station's originator, giant retailer and catalogue merchant Sears-Roebuck & Company, had gained from their West Side Headquarters on Homan Avenue; and

WHEREAS, By the winter of 1923, Sears had made the decision to develop their own broadcasting station. At the dawning era of radio, Sears executives realized they could get in on the ground floor by not only selling radios as well as tubes and other accessories using the "WLS" brand, but providing programming and farm service as well. The station's slogan became "Bringing The World To The Farm"; and

WHEREAS, On April 19th, 1924 the station aired the first National Barn Dance program, a four-hour cavalcade of music, comedy and entertainment including an aggregation of old-time fiddlers and singers with well-known songs from the past. The program became one of the most popular and longest running country-and-western shows in history, second only to The Grand Old Opry. By 1932, the National Barn Dance program was trimmed down to two hours and broadcast live, originating from the Eighth Street Theater in the South Loop; and ,

WHEREAS, Throughout the years, WLS-AM radio has undergone as many transformations as there have been decades in its enduring and illustrious history. On April 1, 1954, WLS became an affiliate of the ABC Radio Network broadcasting on a 50,000 watt signal at 890 on the AM dial; and

WHEREAS, The 1960s saw America change from a rural to an ever-increasing urban society and with that change came rock & roll music. WLS-AM was now the Bright New Sound. Among the host of young "disc jockeys" came a hotshot named Dick Biondi, whose screaming and singing "On Top Of A Pizza" made him an instant Chicago celebrity along with Clark Weber, Dex Card, Art Roberts, Gene Taylor and, yet another Chicago radio legend, Larry Lujack; and

WHEREAS, The 1970s brought Fred Winston to WLS-AM's morning drive and the hiring of Bob Sirott, Steve King, John Records Landecker and their first female African American on-air personality, the late Yvonne Daniels, to make the "Big 89" a dominant force in the Chicago Top 40 music scene; and

WHEREAS, In the 1980s, always on the cutting edge of broadcast technology, WLS became the first AM station in the Midwest to broadcast in stereo. In 1989, WLS was honored by the National Association of Broadcasters with a Marconi Award as "Legendary Station of The Year". That same year, Don & Roma Wade started their morning drive-time talk show that ended with their retirement in 2012 making them the longest running morning duo on Chicago radio; and

WHEREAS, The Honorable Robert W. Fioretti, Alderman of the 2nd Ward, has apprised this august body of the significant milestones achieved by this pioneer of radio broadcasting; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED That we, the Mayor and members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered together this 10th Day of April, 2013 AD, do hereby commend the WLS-AM family for upholding the 89 year broadcasting excellence of this historic radio station and extend our very best wishes for continued success for many decades to come.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVEJ1 That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to the WLS-AM radio stationf^^