

HR 9061

2008

House Resolution

A resolution remembering and honoring Alfred Oerter, Jr.

WHEREAS, Alfred (Al) Oerter, Jr., was born in New York City in 1936 and reared on Long Island where he competed in track as a high school sprinter and miler, and

WHEREAS, when a discus landed at his feet, Al Oerter picked it up and casually threw it back so far that the coach immediately made him a discus thrower, and

WHEREAS, while earning a business degree from the University of Kansas, Al Oerter went on to win two NCAA titles, and

WHEREAS, Al Oerter became the first modern track and field athlete to win four consecutive Olympic titles in one event, and

WHEREAS, as a discus thrower, Al Oerter won Olympic gold medals in 1956, 1960, 1964, and 1968, all the more remarkable because in each victory he broke the Olympic record, beat the world recordholder, overcame an injury, and was not favored to win, and

WHEREAS, in an era before elite athletes trained full time, Al Oerter worked full time as a computer executive for Grumman aircraft corporation, and

WHEREAS, after his fourth gold medal and retirement from track and field, Al Oerter returned to the sport many times and, when asked what he had to prove at that age, he replied, "It's not whether you get there. It's the journey," and

WHEREAS, in 1980, at the age of 43, Al Oerter threw a personal career best and the second longest discus throw in the

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29 world that year and, at the age of 47, he reached the finals of
30 the 1984 Olympic Trials, and

31 WHEREAS, having quit elite competition in 1987, Al Oerter
32 discovered a new passion in abstract painting and helped found
33 Art of the Olympians, a program to help former Olympians
34 showcase their art work, and

35 WHEREAS, Peter Ueberroth, chairman of the U.S. Olympic
36 Committee, captured the spirit of Al Oerter when he said, "His
37 legacy is one of an athlete who embodied all of the positive
38 attributes associated with being an Olympian," and

39 WHEREAS, with the passing of Al Oerter near his home in
40 Fort Myers Beach, Florida, on October 1, 2007, USA Track and
41 Field CEO, Craig Masback, summed up Al Oerter's life by saying,
42 "What made him even more special was his excellence off the
43 track, in pursuits ranging from community outreach to art. The
44 track world has lost a legend, a Hall of Famer, and a true
45 gentleman," and

46 WHEREAS, Al Oerter is survived by his wife, Cathy Oerter, a
47 former competitor in international long jump events; his two
48 daughters, Crystiana Beardslee and Gabrielle Oerter; his sister,
49 Marianne Boland; and three grandchildren, NOW, THEREFORE,

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51 Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of
52 Florida:

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54 That Alfred Oerter, Jr., is remembered and honored for his
55 many accomplishments as one of the greatest track and field
56 athletes of the 20th Century.