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Raoul Wallenberg Proclamation

PROCLAMATION
Honoring Raoul Wallenberg
August 4, 2012

WHEREAS, On August 4, 1912 Raoul Wallenberg was born in Lidingö, Sweden to one of his country's pre-eminent families of industrialists, bankers and diplomats; and

WHEREAS, He came to Ann Arbor in September 1931 to study architecture at the University of Michigan; and

WHEREAS, While he was a student and resident of the city of Ann Arbor, he lived in boarding houses on Huron, Haven and Hill Streets, as well as 308 East Madison which remains standing; and

WHEREAS, He had many friends who admired his intelligence, ingenuity, and courageous self-assurance, and who prized his lack of pretension, sense of fun, and keen interest in the world around him; and

WHEREAS, He came to love Ann Arbor where he watched football in Michigan Stadium, canoed on the Huron, bicycled in the countryside, and attended concerts in Hill Auditorium, writing in a letter to his grandfather: "I feel so at home in my little Ann Arbor that I'm beginning to sink down roots here and have a hard time imagining my leaving it;" and

WHEREAS, He graduated at the top of his class in the architecture program, completing his degree in only three-and-a-half years and winning the American Institute of Architects Silver Medal; and

WHEREAS, Having returned to Sweden where he became a businessman, at the request of the US War Refugee Board, he was sent to Budapest, Hungary in 1944 as an official Swedish diplomat with the mission of saving as many lives as possible by whatever means at his disposal; and

WHEREAS, He purchased and organized an elaborate system of buildings that he placed under Swedish diplomatic protection and used as hospitals, kitchens and safe houses to shelter Jews facing deportation to death camps; and

WHEREAS, He repeatedly put his life at risk to build a network of courageous assistants to fabricate passes conferring Swedish protection and to distribute thousands of these documents to persons facing transport and death; and

WHEREAS, He stopped the German SS from exterminating 70,000 Jews kept as prisoners in a Budapest ghetto and saved the lives of 100,000 persons in a six-month period; and

WHEREAS, When summoned by Soviet forces after the Germans had been driven from the city, he was arrested and disappeared into Soviet prison camps, and the mystery of his fate has never been resolved; and

WHEREAS, Directly or indirectly, hundreds of thousands of American Jews attribute their lives to Wallenberg's actions during World War II, including Andrew Nagy, resident of Ann Arbor; and

WHEREAS, In 1981 he was made an honorary citizen of the United States and in July 2012, the US House of Representatives and the US Senate have authorized the Congressional Gold Medal; and

WHEREAS, The memory of Raoul Wallenberg is honored in memorials and monuments in cities around the world;

NOW THEREFORE, I, John Hieftje, Mayor of Ann Arbor, Michigan would like to honor Raoul Wallenberg on the centenary of his birth, to recognize him as one of the great humanitarians of history, to celebrate his achievements and accomplishments in saving the lives of tens of thousands who faced death during World War II, and to acknowledge him as an illustrious resident of Ann Arbor from which, as a young man, he departed on his life's heroic journey.

I hereby set my hand and seal
This the 4th day of August, 2012

John Hieftje, Mayor