

1 [James W. Chow Day - May 12, 2021]

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3 **Resolution commending James W. Chow on the occasion of his 100th birthday, and**
4 **declaring May 12, 2021, as James W. Chow Day in the City and County of San**
5 **Francisco.**

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7 WHEREAS, James W. Chow, born May 12, 1921 in San Jose, California, is one of
8 California's most remarkable native sons and a hero to his family, friends and community; and

9 WHEREAS, In the eyes of his family and friends, Mr. Chow is one-of-a-kind: an
10 indomitable, independent, self-reliant, community-minded man who lives what he preaches:
11 hard work, study, thrift, respect, gumption, with love of family and loyalty to friends, and
12 upholding pride in his heritage; and

13 WHEREAS, Having been born in a period of intense anti-Chinese racism and under a
14 system of discriminatory, restrictive laws that stifled immigration and land ownership, Mr.
15 Chow relocated to China under his parent's care in 1922; and

16 WHEREAS, Mr. Chow returned to California at 13 with \$2 in his pocket in July 1934, in
17 the midst of the Great Depression; and

18 WHEREAS, Mr. Chow faced intense interrogation by the Special Board of Inquiry
19 comprised of three U.S. Immigration inspectors to prove his natural-born citizenship, and
20 stayed approximately two weeks in the detention barracks and the U.S. hospital in the area
21 known as China Cove, in the northeast corner of Angel Island, awaiting adjudication of his
22 case; and

23 WHEREAS, After proving his citizenship, Mr. Chow learned to cook when he
24 accompanied his older brother on trips across the country to Florida, worked at restaurants
25 during school breaks, developed a habit of earning his keep and saving for his education, and,

1 while not working, joined his Galileo and Chung Wah Chinese Central High School friends,
2 riding street cars and buses all over San Francisco in addition to car trips to Los Angeles; and

3 WHEREAS, Mr. Chow served his country during World War II as a shipfitter at the
4 Hunters Point and Mare Island U.S. Naval Shipyards from 1942 to 1945, contributing mightily
5 to the war effort; and

6 WHEREAS, While working in the shipyards, Mr. Chow attended City College, studying
7 to be an engineer, where he met his future wife, the lovely and intelligent Arleen May Gong,
8 and where they were active in the China War Relief - staging plays and performances in
9 storefronts and school auditoriums to raise funds and support for the Allied effort in China and
10 the Pacific; and

11 WHEREAS, After the war, Mr. Chow went into business with his older brother, taking
12 over a grocery store in Oakland, the "Friendly Food Market" at the corner of Allendale and
13 38th Avenues, in a predominantly Caucasian neighborhood in which he handled the grocery
14 department, his brother the meat department and together they earned the loyalty and trust of
15 their customers and neighbors; and

16 WHEREAS, In 1952, a few years after the birth of their first child, Mr. and Mrs. Chow
17 opened "The Fashion Center," a women's and children's clothing and variety store on San
18 Francisco's Stockton Street; and

19 WHEREAS, Over the course of little more than decade, while raising his children
20 Stephanie, Christopher and Lisa, Mr. Chow expanded into the poultry product wholesale
21 business, serving clients in the East Bay, North Bay and San Joaquin Valley, and the laundry
22 service industry with the coin-operated "Sani-White Laundromat," among the first in
23 Chinatown to offer self-service machines to customers; and

24 WHEREAS, After Mr. Chow put all his children through San Francisco State University
25 and the University of California, he helped his wife earn her bachelor's degree and teaching

1 credential from University of San Francisco; and

2 WHEREAS, From the 1970s to 2007, Mr. Chow was a stalwart ally and assistant to his
3 late wife, during her 35-year tenure as a teacher and vice-principal of the Hip Wo Chinese
4 Christian Academy, one of America’s longest-standing Chinese language schools; and

5 WHEREAS, Mr. Chow has been active in building and strengthening his community
6 organizations and institutions, serving as a leader and five-term English Secretary for the Gee
7 Tuck Sam Tuck Benevolent Association; and

8 WHEREAS, Mr. Chow served as Chairman of the Board of the Chung Wah Alumni
9 Association (Chinese Central High School) for more than 20 years, inspiring new leadership to
10 sustain its mission to serve the Chinese-American community, including the launch of a
11 capital campaign to renovate and retrofit the school campus in Chinatown; and

12 WHEREAS, Mr. Chow serves as the epitome of the common man who lived his
13 principles to an uncommon degree with uncommon endurance and uncommon will, his life
14 encapsulating good, hard work; thriftiness; education; fairness; freedom; honesty; respect for
15 all people and gumption to do the right thing in the right way; now, therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco
17 commends James W. Chow on the occasion of his 100th birthday; and, be it

18 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San
19 Francisco declares May 12, 2021, as James W. Chow Day in the City and County of San
20 Francisco.

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