

1 [José Julio Sarria Day - May 22, 2012]

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3 **Resolution honoring José Julio Sarria for his tremendous contributions to San**
4 **Francisco’s political and cultural life, including being the first openly gay candidate for**
5 **a political elected office in the United States when he ran for the San Francisco Board**
6 **of Supervisors in 1961, and declaring May 22, 2012, as José Julio Sarria Day in the City**
7 **and County of San Francisco.**

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9 WHEREAS, José Julio Sarria was a groundbreaking and fearless leader of the gay
10 community in San Francisco, founding several advocacy organizations and using
11 entertainment to create political change; and

12 WHEREAS, José Julio Sarria began his theatrical career at the historic Black Cat Bar
13 earning the alias, “The Nightingale of Montgomery Street,” for singing his beautiful arias from
14 the opera while he delivered drinks to bar patrons; and

15 WHEREAS, The Nightingale of Montgomery Street used his performance platform to
16 encourage bar patrons to come out of the closet and live openly and honestly, delivering
17 famous sayings like, “There’s nothing wrong with being gay-the crime is getting caught” and
18 “United we stand, divided they catch us one by one,” and

19 WHEREAS, José Julio Sarria was forced to abandon his dream of becoming a teacher
20 when he was unjustly arrested for solicitation in a sting operation at St. Francis Hotel; and

21 WHEREAS, José Julio Sarria formed the League for Civil Education in order to run
22 educational programs on the topic of homosexuality and provide support for men being
23 ostracized for being gay or who were caught up in a police raid; and

24 WHEREAS, In 1961, José Julio Sarria ran for a seat on the San Francisco Board of
25 Supervisors, becoming the first openly gay man to run for elected office in the United States

1 and coming in ninth place out of a field of 32 candidates, establishing the fact that a gay
2 voting bloc could wield significant political power in San Francisco; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1962, José Julio Sarria cofounded the Tavern Guild, the country's first
4 gay business association; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1963, José Julio Sarria helped found the Society for Individual Rights
6 that sponsored both social and political functions for the gay community as well as helped
7 educate gay men about their rights if arrested or harassed by the police; and

8 WHEREAS, José Julio Sarria assumed the moniker "Her Royal Majesty, Empress of
9 San Francisco, José I, The Widow Norton," in homage to the much celebrated citizen of 19th
10 century San Francisco, Joshua Norton, who had declared himself Emperor of the United
11 States and Protector of Mexico in 1859; and

12 WHEREAS, José Julio Sarria's assumption of the title of Empress led to the
13 establishment of the Imperial Court System, a network of non-profit charitable organizations
14 throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico that uses drag shows and other functions
15 to raise money for gay charities throughout the world; and

16 WHEREAS, José Julio Sarria returns to his home City of San Francisco the week of
17 May 21, 2012, in order to receive a lifetime achievement award from the Harvey Milk Club;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, José Julio Sarria was one of Harvey Milk's early campaign endorsers and
20 May 22, 2012, is Harvey Milk's birthday; now, therefore, be it

21 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Board of Supervisors commends José Julio
22 Sarria for his lifetime of activism, cultural and artistic work, and political advocacy on behalf of
23 San Francisco's gay community; and, be it

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1 FURTHER RESOLVED, That in recognition of José Julio Sarria’s outstanding bravery
2 and beautiful life’s work, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors officially declares May 22,
3 2012, as José Julio Sarria Day in the City and County of San Francisco.

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