



# State of New York

## Executive Chamber

### Citation

**Whereas**, the citizens of the Empire State recognize individuals who have distinguished themselves through their lasting contributions to our artistic and cultural heritage, and we take pleasure in honoring William Joseph Kennedy as a New York author of great talent and wide renown, as an insightful and encouraging educator, as a shining intellect, and as an inspirational ambassador of all things literary; and

**Whereas**, born into an Irish Catholic family on January 16, 1928 and raised in the North End of Albany, Bill Kennedy graduated from Siena College and served in the United States Army; subsequently, he spent time in Puerto Rico, developing lasting friendships and mentoring relationships with writers like the incomparable Saul Bellow and Hunter S. Thompson, men who encouraged him to find his voice and also become a writer; and

**Whereas**, returning to Albany, a place he had previously believed he'd left far behind, Bill Kennedy took a job at the Albany Times Union as an investigative journalist and political reporter; it was not long before he began to use his hometown as the backdrop and the inspiration for his work, creating a vibrant historical setting from our fascinating Capital City on the majestic Hudson – one that springs to life on the page, drawing us into bygone eras we seem to recognize time and again, and this artistry, not inconsequently, put Albany on the literary map; and

**Whereas**, Bill Kennedy's writings include *The Ink Truck* (1969), *Legs* (1975), *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game* (1978), *Ironweed* (1983), for which he won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the National Book Critics Circle Award, the nonfiction *O Albany!* (1983), *Very Old Bones* (1992), and *Roscoe* (2002), among many other novels, stories, histories, and screenplays – altogether an impressive and critically-acclaimed body of work, of which he and all who know him can be proud; and

**Whereas**, in 1983, Bill Kennedy founded and became the Executive Director of the New York State Writer's Institute, at the State University at Albany, which has become the center for the literary arts in New York State, through various programs designed to encourage the development of writing skills at all levels, via a broad range of cultural and educational literary activities, including readings, lectures, seminars, film series, and the State Author and State Poet Awards; and

**Whereas**, recently celebrating his 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday with many loyal friends and devoted family, and with much deserved fanfare, William Kennedy remains Albany's favorite son; his larger-than-life personality, his Irish charm and wit, his enormous talent and gift for the written word, not to be outdone by his ability with the spoken – the sum of these parts cannot account for the extraordinary impact that our beloved local literary lion has had on the Empire State's legacy of literature;

**Now, Therefore**, I, Eliot Spitzer, Governor of the State of New York, do hereby confer this Special Citation upon

### WILLIAM JOSEPH KENNEDY

in recognition of his unparalleled professional achievements and the remarkable body of work which a grateful literate public will forever continue to enjoy.



Governor  
March 3, 2008