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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened to learn of the death of Herbert Rogers Kent, who passed away at the age of 88; and

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WHEREAS, Herbert Kent was born on October 5, 1928 in Chicago; he grew up in the Ida B. Wells housing project in Bronzeville and showed an early fascination with radio, building makeshift devices out of toilet paper inserts, crystals, wires, and earphones; and

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WHEREAS, Herbert Kent got his start in radio while still a student at Hyde Park High School; in 1944, at the age of 16, he hosted a classical music program for WBEZ; he later joined and eventually became president of the school's radio club; and

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WHEREAS, After high school, Herbert Kent worked with a local theater company, the Skyloft Players, developing and honing the improvisational skills that would later lead to the creation of radio characters he made famous at WVON, including "The Wahoo Man" and "Gym Shoe Creeper"; in 1949, he landed his first paid radio job at WGRY in Gary, Indiana; he later reached the height of his popularity as a WVON "Good Guy", a part of a colorful stable of DJs that ruled black radio in Chicago from the early 1960s to early 1970s; he was deeply involved with the

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1 station for more than 50 years and was instrumental in calming
2 rioters in Chicago from over the airwaves after the death of
3 the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.; and

4 WHEREAS, After a stint at WGCI, Herbert Kent joined adult
5 contemporary radio station WVAZ/V103 in 1989, where he
6 continued playing the old-school tunes he coined "dusties" and
7 conducting radio "Battle of the Best" competitions between
8 similar old-school artists, like Michael Jackson versus
9 Prince, until his passing; he held the distinction of being the
10 longest serving DJ according to the Guinness Book of World
11 Records; and

12 WHEREAS, In 2009, Herbert Kent collaborated with David
13 Smallwood on his biography, "The Cool Gent, the Nine Lives of
14 Radio Legend Herb Kent"; and

15 WHEREAS, Herbert Kent was honored with the naming of "Herb
16 Kent Drive" near his former high school, from the 6000 to 6700
17 block of Stony Island Avenue in Chicago, in honor of his work;
18 in 1995, he was inducted into the Museum of Broadcast
19 Communications Hall of Fame with the first class of black radio
20 inductees; he was inducted into the National Radio Hall of Fame
21 in 1995; he was also inducted into the Gwendolyn Brooks Hall of
22 Fame at Chicago State University and was voted Mayor of
23 Bronzeville in 1999 in a contest started by the Defender

1 newspaper in the 1930s and revived by the Bronzeville Merchants
2 Association; therefore, be it

3 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL
4 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we, along with his
5 family and friends, mourn the passing of Herbert Rogers Kent;
6 and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
8 presented to the family of Herbert Kent as an expression of our
9 sympathy.