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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Reverend Jesse Jackson was a pivotal figure in the Civil Rights Movement, an influential political leader in Illinois and across the nation, and a dedicated Baptist minister in Chicago; and

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WHEREAS, From a young age, Rev. Jackson was an active participant in local and national civil rights efforts, protesting against segregation and unfair working conditions, which included staging a sit-in at a whites-only public library in Greenville, South Carolina in 1960; and

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WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson's connection to Illinois began at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where he accepted a football scholarship and played for the university for one year; and

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WHEREAS, While enrolled at the Chicago Theological Seminary, Rev. Jackson's organized protests against violent police responses led him to meet Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., prompting him to join the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and participate in the historic 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama; and

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WHEREAS, Returning to Chicago, Rev. Jackson led the SCLC's

1 Operation Breadbasket, a project that prioritized opening  
2 doors for Black Americans in the workforce, promoting  
3 Black-owned enterprises, and encouraging white businesses to  
4 invest in Black companies, which resulted in his appointment  
5 as national director of SCLC in 1967; and

6 WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson founded Operation PUSH (People  
7 United to Save Humanity) in Chicago's Kenwood neighborhood,  
8 with a focus on Black economic empowerment and opportunity;  
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson spoke boldly about the Chicago news  
11 media's exclusiveness for white-only reporters, boycotting and  
12 picketing in front of WBBM-Channel 2's Streeterville studio  
13 for 10 months, ultimately leading to the increased hiring of  
14 people of color and women at the station; and

15 WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson established the Rainbow Coalition in  
16 1984, drawing inspiration from activist and civil rights icon  
17 Fred Hampton's vision to advocate for social programs, voting  
18 rights, and affirmative action for all groups negatively  
19 impacted by the economic policies of President Ronald Reagan's  
20 administration; and

21 WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson's presidential campaigns in 1984 and  
22 1988 highlighted his commitment to fairness and inclusion and

1 attracted a diverse coalition of supporters from big cities,  
2 suburbs, and small towns alike; and

3 WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson remained deeply engaged with  
4 progressive policy, serving as a shadow delegate and shadow  
5 U.S. Senator for the District of Columbia (D.C.) from 1991 to  
6 1997; and

7 WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson proved to be an invaluable advisor  
8 in international diplomacy, successfully securing the release  
9 of captives in Syria, Iraq, and Kosovo, advocating for peace  
10 in Northern Ireland, and serving as President Bill Clinton's  
11 special envoy of democracy to Kenya; and

12 WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson continued his pursuit of Black  
13 social justice and corporate accountability by merging the  
14 Rainbow Coalition and Operation Push civil rights  
15 organizations in 1996; and

16 WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson's profound commitment to lifelong  
17 public service was recognized with the Presidential Medal of  
18 Freedom in 2000; and

19 WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson passed peacefully at the age of 84  
20 in the early morning of February 17, 2025; and

1           WHEREAS, It is highly fitting that the State of Illinois  
2 honors Rev. Jackson's lifelong exemplary public service, his  
3 tireless commitment to the advancement of Black Americans, and  
4 his powerful influence on the Civil Rights Movement;  
5 therefore, be it

6           RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
7 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
8 we honor the life and unwavering commitment of Rev. Jesse  
9 Jackson upon his death on February 17, 2026.