



HR0801

LRB104 21429 LAW 36488 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Samuel
4 R. "Sam" Harris, one of the youngest known survivors of the
5 Holocaust; and

6 WHEREAS, Sam Harris was born Szlamek Rzeknik in Deblin,
7 Poland in 1935; at the age of four, he witnessed the Nazi
8 occupation of his hometown; he, his parents, and his seven
9 siblings were subsequently forced to move into a ghetto, where
10 they lived until its liquidation in 1942; he and two of his
11 older sisters, Rosa and Sara, were then separated from their
12 parents and remaining siblings, who were deported to the
13 Treblinka extermination camp and murdered; and

14 WHEREAS, Sam Harris survived the Holocaust through the
15 fierce, protective love of his sister, Rosa, who worked as a
16 slave laborer in the concentration camp outside of Deblin,
17 where she hid both him and his other sister, Sara; they were
18 all transported to the Czestochowa concentration camp in 1944,
19 where Rosa was again able to hide her two siblings; he and his
20 sisters were all liberated by the Soviet Army on January 17,
21 1945; the following year, he and Sara were smuggled to Austria
22 by Rosa, who then arranged for her younger siblings'
23 relocation to the United States in 1947, where he was adopted

1 by the Harris family of Illinois, moved to Chicago, and was
2 given the opportunity to experience college, a career,
3 marriage, and fatherhood; and

4 WHEREAS, Sam Harris began telling his story of survival
5 and resilience in the late 1970s, later publishing his memoir,
6 *Sammy: Child Survivor of the Holocaust*, in 1999; he
7 reconnected with his past at the World Gathering of Jewish
8 Holocaust Survivors in Jerusalem in 1981; he later joined the
9 campaign to require Holocaust education in Illinois public
10 schools and shared his testimony with thousands of young
11 people, always believing that the next generation could build
12 a more just world; and

13 WHEREAS, Sam Harris became the visionary force behind the
14 establishment of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education
15 Center in Skokie, serving as museum president from 2002 to
16 2009; he continued to guide the museum as president emeritus,
17 serving on the board of directors and the Survivor Speakers'
18 Bureau; he bestowed his cracked leather belt, the only
19 artifact he carried out of the camps, to be put on display in
20 the museum's Karkomi Holocaust Exhibition, and he provided his
21 interactive testimony to its Abe & Ida Cooper Survivor Stories
22 Experience; and

23 WHEREAS, Sam Harris was the recipient of the Ellis Island

1 Medal of Honor in 2014, one of country's most prestigious
2 awards presented annually to naturalized and native-born
3 Americans whose lives reflect a proud commitment to our
4 nation's ideals of diversity, opportunity, and service; and

5 WHEREAS, Sam Harris remained steadfast in his belief of
6 the importance of continuing to teach the lessons of the
7 Holocaust in order to both remember those who were lost and
8 prevent such atrocities from occurring again, and through his
9 work, his indomitable spirit will continue to inspire future
10 generations; and

11 WHEREAS, Sam Harris was preceded in death by his son,
12 David; and

13 WHEREAS, Sam Harris is survived by his spouse, Dede; his
14 daughter, Julie (Jeff) Kreamer; and his grandchildren, Jessica
15 and Jeremy Kreamer; therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
17 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
18 we mourn the passing of Samuel R. "Sam" Harris and extend our
19 sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew
20 and loved him; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be

1 presented to the family of Sam Harris as an expression of our
2 deepest sympathy.