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1 SENATE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened
3 to learn of the death of Standish E. "Kwame" Willis, Esq. of
4 Chicago, who passed away in his spiritual homeland of Ghana,
5 West Africa on February 28, 2025; and

6 WHEREAS, Stan Willis, born to Mr. Andrew and Mrs. Plumie
7 Willis on August 16, 1941, was a lifelong Chicagoan who was
8 raised on the West Side and influenced by his mother's Church of
9 God in Christ (COGIC) faith, his father's work ethic, and his
10 uncle's Garveyite ideals; he was a first-generation high
11 school graduate who enlisted into the United States Air Force
12 during the Vietnam War; after being honorably discharged, he
13 worked as a bus driver for the Chicago Transit Authority
14 (CTA), where he helped organize several wildcat strikes,
15 including the largest in Chicago's history that disrupted
16 travel city-wide during the 1968 Democratic National
17 Convention, which helped win concessions from the CTA union
18 and led the City of Chicago to begin dismantling racist
19 policies and practices impacting Black drivers; and

20 WHEREAS, Stan Willis, while still with the CTA, attended
21 Crane Junior College, where he was an active student leader;
22 during his studies, he led a march to protest the murders of
23 Black college students by South Carolina National Guardsmen in

1 Orangeburg, South Carolina; he also served as editor of the
2 college yearbook, founded the Afro-American History Club, and
3 was elected as president of Student Government, through which
4 he led the student movement to name the new campus after
5 Malcolm X; upon completing his associate's degree, he
6 transferred to the University of Chicago, earning a Bachelor
7 of Arts and a master's degree in Latin American Studies; he
8 studied economics at the master's degree level at the
9 University of Illinois Chicago, and he earned his Juris Doctor
10 from Chicago-Kent College of Law of the Illinois Institute of
11 Technology; and

12 WHEREAS, Stan Willis became a lawyer who specialized in
13 civil rights, police brutality and misconduct, criminal
14 defense work, and human rights; he initially joined Peoples'
15 Law Office (PLO) as a partner, during which time he also joined
16 the Lawyers for Washington movement; he served with PLO for
17 several years prior to establishing his own firm, The Law
18 Office of Standish E. Willis, in 1989; he tried numerous
19 federal jury trials and several state jury and bench trials,
20 and he argued many cases before the Seventh Circuit Court of
21 Appeals; he also litigated hundreds of civil rights lawsuits
22 against many municipalities involving public officials, served
23 on the Federal Defender Panel and its prestigious Selection
24 Committee, and was named one of Chicago's "Tough Lawyers" by
25 Chicago magazine in 2002; and

1 WHEREAS, Stan Willis taught in various settings over the
2 course of his professional life, devoting the same level of
3 dedication and rigor to the classroom that he brought to the
4 courtroom and community organizing; he taught a number of
5 courses, including the GED program at Malcom X College,
6 African American history at Stateville Correctional Center,
7 and economics at Roosevelt University for ten years; he was a
8 frequent guest lecturer at Chicago-area law schools and led
9 annual workshops for lawyers and lay people across the nation,
10 providing state-certified continuing legal education (CLE)
11 credits; he served as a faculty-lecturer for the annual civil
12 rights seminar sponsored by the Illinois Institute for
13 Continuing Legal Education (IICLE), the Chicago-Kent College
14 of Law, and the American Bar Association in the area of 42
15 U.S.C. 1983 on civil rights liability and litigation; he also
16 maintained speaking engagements on issues related to the
17 criminal justice system, the death penalty, police violence,
18 community control of police, the prison-industrial complex,
19 America's political prisoners, racism and the American legal
20 system, international human rights, and reparations; further,
21 he was the subject of and contributed to articles and chapters
22 of numerous books, dissertations, and documentaries; and

23 WHEREAS, Stan Willis founded the grassroots organization
24 Black People Against Police Torture (BPAPT) in 2005; he led a

1 coalition of lawyers, activists, and community members to
2 internationalize the Chicago Police Torture cases by means of
3 international human rights mechanisms and treaties to which
4 the U.S. was subject; he presented evidence of police torture
5 before the Organization of American States' Inter-American
6 Commission on Human Rights in 2005, the UN Committee Against
7 Torture (CAT) in 2006, and the United Nations' Committee to
8 Eliminate Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 2008, helping to
9 bring a modicum of justice in the Chicago police torture cases
10 by sparking the indictment of former Chicago Police Department
11 Commander Jon Burge; through BPAPT, he called for reparations,
12 was among the first to challenge Chicago's right to host the
13 Olympics, coined the now familiar phrase of "the torture
14 capital of the U. S.", and personally initiated and drafted
15 the legislative bill that was ultimately enacted in 2009 in
16 the form of the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission
17 (TIRC), securing justice and freeing many torture victims and
18 survivors; and

19 WHEREAS, Stan Kwame was involved in many social justice
20 campaigns, including the Free South Africa Movement to end
21 Apartheid; he organized the African-American Defense Committee
22 Against Police Violence after the televised beating of Rodney
23 King in 1991 and The Riverdale Eight, a group of
24 African-American women who were brutalized by Riverdale police
25 officers, in 1995; he joined many abolitionists globally to

1 spare former Black Panther Party member Mumia Abu Jamal from
2 execution, organizing and chairing the African-American
3 Committee to Free Mumia Abu Jamal; he continued educating and
4 mobilizing support for all victims of racial and political
5 oppression, including the numerous victims of the notorious
6 Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) by authoring a
7 stakeholders' report on COINTELPRO Political Prisoners in
8 2010, which was submitted to the first UN Universal Periodic
9 Review (UPR) of the United States; he was also instrumental in
10 leading then-Governor George H. Ryan to clearing Illinois'
11 death row and commuting the death sentences of four men who had
12 been convicted based on tortured confessions; and

13 WHEREAS, Stan Willis was a longtime member of the National
14 Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL), serving as chair of its
15 Chicago Chapter; he was a longtime board member for the Black
16 United Fund of Illinois (BUFI) and co-founded several
17 significant institutions, including the Communiversity, a
18 pre-cursor to the Center for Inner City Studies, the Black
19 Student Congress, African Liberation Day in Chicago, the
20 National Anti-Imperialist Movement in Solidarity with African
21 Liberation, the Chicago Conference of Black Lawyers/NCBL
22 affiliate, and the Office of HBCU Development and
23 International Cooperation (OHBCUD); he also served as a member
24 of the Durban 400 in 2001, helping secure a UN declaration that
25 the Transatlantic slave trade was a crime against humanity;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, Stan Willis was often recognized for his
3 unswerving commitment to social justice work and solidarity by
4 groups across racial, generational, and class lines, including
5 the National Lawyers Guild, the Arab American Action Network,
6 the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Cook County Bar
7 Association, and the National Conference of Black Lawyers; he
8 became the namesake of the Standish E. Willis Community
9 Service Award by Black law students at Chicago-Kent College of
10 Law in 1984; and

11 WHEREAS, Stan Willis will be remembered as a tireless
12 advocate for oppressed communities across the globe who stayed
13 true to his Chicago roots and Pan African calling, remaining
14 guided by the needs of the community and the people;
15 therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL
17 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
18 Standish E. "Kwame" Willis, Esq. and extend our sincere
19 condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew and loved
20 him; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
22 presented to the family of Stan Willis as an expression of our

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1 deepest sympathy.