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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Pervis "Blues Man" Spann of Chicago, who passed away on March 14, 2022; and

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WHEREAS, Pervis Spann was born in Itta Bena, Mississippi on August 16, 1932; alongside his mother and sister, he moved to Battle Creek, Michigan in 1949; he soon followed his father to Indiana; he served stateside in the U.S. Army during the Korean War era; he then moved to Chicago; he attended the Midway Television Institute and the Midwestern Broadcasting School and was also a student of the Moody Bible Institute; and

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WHEREAS, Pervis Spann's first job in radio was as a disc jockey (DJ) at station WOPA in Oak Park in the 1950s; he was hired as a DJ at WVON by Leonard Chess, co-founder of Chess Records, who bought the station in 1963; he became known as one of WVON's "Good Guys", a group of star DJs, and was noted as one of the few DJs who played music that related to the Black experience; he gained notoriety with an on-air, 87-hour sleepless sit-in, which raised money for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; he established a brilliant and unique relationship with Barry Gordy of Motown Records, which permitted new Motown recordings to be heard on WVON first; he co-founded the Midway

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1 Broadcasting Corporation with fellow DJ Wesley South to run
2 the station in 1979; he also bought radio stations in Atlanta,
3 Jacksonville, Florida, and Memphis; and

4 WHEREAS, Pervis Spann formed the Delta Production Company,
5 which promoted and produced shows featuring Black
6 entertainment for Black audiences, with venues including The
7 Regal Theater, Aragon Ballroom, Chicago Stadium, Arie Crown
8 Theater, Lyric Opera House, Trianon Ballroom, and Soldier
9 Field; he promoted between 90 to 95 percent of all the major
10 concerts in the Chicago area, booking such stars as James
11 Brown, Sammy Davis Jr., The Temptations, Chaka Khan, Dinah
12 Washington, Jerry Butler, The Impressions, The Four Tops,
13 Marvin Gaye, Al Green, Otis Clay, Earth, Wind & Fire, Sam
14 Cooke, The Staple Singers, The Commodores, Marvin Gaye, Cab
15 Calloway, Roy Hamilton, Jackie Wilson, Little Richard, and
16 Count Basie, among others; and

17 WHEREAS, Pervis Spann was credited with boosting the
18 careers of Aretha Franklin, B.B. King, and the Jackson 5; he
19 gave Aretha Franklin the moniker "Queen of Soul"; alongside
20 fellow DJ E. Rodney Jones, he purchased the Burning Spear
21 nightclub on 55th Street in the early 1960s, which was the
22 setting for the Jackson 5's first Chicago performance and
23 where they won their first major talent show; and

1 WHEREAS, Pervis Spann hosted the cable TV show Blues and
2 More with his comedian friend Carl Wright; he also authored
3 the memoir 40 Years Spann; and

4 WHEREAS, Pervis Spann ran in Chicago's Republican mayoral
5 primary in 1991 and for the Chicago City Council's 18th Ward in
6 1999; and

7 WHEREAS, Pervis Spann was known for helping others through
8 providing shows and outreach; he enjoyed boxing and
9 photography; he will be remembered as an astute businessman
10 and a cultural icon; and

11 WHEREAS, Pervis Spann is survived by his wife of 67 years,
12 Lovie Spann; his son and caretaker, Darrell; and his
13 daughters, Melody Spann Cooper, Latrice Levitt, and Chanté
14 Spann; therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
16 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
17 we mourn the passing of Pervis "Blues Man" Spann and extend our
18 sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew
19 and loved him; and be it further

20 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
21 presented to the family of Pervis Spann as an expression of our

1 deepest sympathy.