WHEREAS, History honors the soldiers of war that fight to defend the nation; at this time, we honor a different kind of soldier fighting a different kind of war, one guided not by master tacticians or generals but guided instead by the hearts, grit, and resolve of those willing to risk their lives not in the trenches of faraway lands but in the intensive care units, hospitals, precincts, and fire stations here at home; and

WHEREAS, According to a 2017 compilation of data on the Emergency Services Sector in the United States by the Department of Homeland Security, the first responder community is comprised of an estimated 4.6 million career and volunteer professionals within five primary disciplines, which are law enforcement, fire and rescue services, emergency medical services, emergency management, and public works; and

WHEREAS, Of all U.S. states, Illinois has the sixth largest population and the 25th largest land area and is home to over 12 million residents who occupy nearly 58,000 square miles of land that is prone to freezing temperatures, torrential rains and flash floods, fires, tornados, severe storms, and other natural disasters, as well as threats of violence and terror; and
WHEREAS, Illinois is known for its extraordinary response to these emergencies; 911 dispatchers, as well as professional and volunteer fire, police, emergency medical technicians, and paramedic workers stand as our first line of defense in protecting our communities to ensure that Illinois is the safest place to live, work, and visit; and

WHEREAS, No greater courage is demonstrated than that of the dedicated and brave first responders who run toward emergencies that threaten the communities and cities they call home and the welfare and lives of those who live there; first responders put their lives on the line by protecting and administering care to others in need; and

WHEREAS, First responders accept the challenges and responsibilities of serving others without a second thought; they selflessly perform their duties, sometimes even at the cost of their own safety and lives, in order to provide a superior level of service more concerned with the needs of others than their own; and

WHEREAS, With the COVID-19 pandemic, first responders have been called to perform a service unlike any the country has faced in more than a century; they have proven that they can be relied upon to provide their services in the face of more
adversity, not less; COVID-19 has not replaced the disasters of yesterday's normal, but it stands as an extra force with which to contend among the disasters of today's new normal; and

WHEREAS, Swift aid and assistance begins with 911 dispatchers, the first responders that know too well the importance of getting the proper aid where it is most needed as efficiently as possible; the responsibility of dispatching police, fire, and medical personnel is often the difference between lives saved and lives lost; with the unprecedented pressure of COVID-19, 911 dispatchers are an integral part of the public safety response, now more than ever, and remind us that the bridge between refuge and peril begins with the team of first responders too often overlooked; and

WHEREAS, Our attempts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic have changed more than how we act toward one another; we have changed our perspective of heroism, of bravery, and of what it means to be a first responder or, as the term has now evolved, a frontline and/or essential worker; and

WHEREAS, The sometimes insurmountable pressure that first responders carry on their shoulders, in their gallant pursuit to save lives even at the sacrifice of their own, places them at the echelon of the those that receive the most thunderous
praise, the highest of honors, the deepest respect, and the
most profound recognitions for their consistent commitments
and contributions to safety, defense, and honor; therefore, be
it

RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we recognize the
efforts of Illinois' first responders, and we extend our
gratitude to all first responders for continuously putting
their lives on the line for the citizens of Illinois; and be it
further

RESOLVED, That we recognize and remember the first
responders we have lost along the way.