



HR0120

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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 Oscar  
4 Lawton Wilkerson Jr. of Markham, who passed away on February  
5 8, 2023; and

6           WHEREAS, Oscar Wilkerson was born in Chicago Heights on  
7 February 9, 1926; he graduated from Bloom Township High School  
8 in 1944; and

9           WHEREAS, Oscar Wilkerson registered for the U.S. Army Air  
10 Force; he passed his flight test in 1946, earning his wings and  
11 a rank of second lieutenant as part of the Tuskegee Airmen, the  
12 nation's first Black aviation combat unit; with the recent end  
13 of World War II, he was tasked with aiding the postwar cleanup  
14 efforts; and

15           WHEREAS, Oscar Wilkerson finished his service by flying  
16 B-52s to Kingman, Arizona for storage or disassembly in the  
17 U.S. military's aircraft "boneyard" and was a lifeguard at an  
18 officer's pool; he was also in charge of the officer's club at  
19 a base in Columbus, Ohio; and

20           WHEREAS, Oscar Wilkerson worked as a freelance  
21 photographer most of his life; in 1962, he began a career in

1 radio with WBEE-AM in Harvey, where he was a weekend host known  
2 as "Weekend Wilkie" as well as program director and manager of  
3 community affairs; he later worked at WMAQ-AM; he retired in  
4 1988; and

5 WHEREAS, Oscar Wilkerson was the second vice president of  
6 the Chicago chapter of Tuskegee Airmen Inc., which was called  
7 the Dodo Chapter because the founders felt that if they did not  
8 preserve the legacy then they would die off like the dodo bird,  
9 which went extinct because it lost the ability to fly; as a  
10 presenter on Black history and the Tuskegee Airman experience,  
11 he frequently told students about the five-point road map that  
12 the Tuskegee airmen used to be successful, which included do  
13 not fear greatness, do not let anyone tell you that you cannot  
14 do something, excel in what you do, remain united and help each  
15 other reach a common goal, and with courage and dedication you  
16 can overcome adversity; and

17 WHEREAS, Oscar Wilkerson's love of aviation never faded;  
18 he owned a small single-engine Cessna for years; he delighted  
19 in introducing children to aviation by meeting them at the  
20 Gary/Chicago Airport and taking them for their first flights,  
21 which were free through the Experimental Aircraft  
22 Association's Young Eagles Program; and

23 WHEREAS, Oscar Wilkerson was among approximately 300

1 surviving members of the Tuskegee Airmen awarded the  
2 Congressional Gold Medal in 2007 by President George W. Bush;  
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Oscar Wilkerson was inducted into the Bloom High  
5 School Hall of Fame on November 6, 2021; therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
7 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
8 we mourn the passing of Oscar Lawton Wilkerson Jr. and extend  
9 our sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all who  
10 knew and loved him; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
12 presented to the family of Oscar Wilkerson as an expression of  
13 our deepest sympathy.