



HR0511

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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 actor
4 Richard Arnold Roundtree, who passed away on October 24, 2023;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, Richard Roundtree was born to Kathryn (Watkins)
7 and John Roundtree in New Rochelle, New York on July 9, 1942;
8 he graduated from New Rochelle High School, where he played on
9 its nationally ranked football team; he attended Southern
10 Illinois University Carbondale (SIU) on a football scholarship
11 from 1961 to 1963; he married Mary Jane Grant in 1963, and they
12 had two children before divorcing in 1973; he later married
13 Karen M. Cierna in 1980, and they had three children before
14 divorcing in 1998; and

15 WHEREAS, Richard Roundtree left SIU after signing as a
16 model for the Ebony Fashion Fair, touring 79 cities in 90 days;
17 following this opportunity, he returned to New York to pursue
18 acting, joining the Negro Ensemble Company in 1967; he
19 appeared in several Off-Broadway shows, including as
20 heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson in a production of
21 The Great White Hope; and

22 WHEREAS, Richard Roundtree was best known for playing

1 private detective John Shaft in the 1971 film *Shaft*, a role
2 that many consider the first African American action hero; he
3 returned to play the character in two sequels, which premiered
4 in 1972 and 1973 respectively, and the similarly named TV
5 series from 1973 to 1974; he later returned to the movie
6 franchise for the 2019 remake, which featured Samuel L.
7 Jackson taking on the titular role; and

8 WHEREAS, In addition to the *Shaft* franchise, Richard
9 Roundtree earned more than 100 credits across film and
10 television projects; he appeared in dozens of films, including
11 the 1974 disaster drama *Earthquake*, starring Charlton Heston,
12 Ava Gardner, George Kennedy, and Lorne Greene, and the 1984
13 buddy-crime-comedy *City Heat*, working alongside Clint Eastwood
14 and Burt Reynolds; he made appearances in dozens of television
15 shows, including the miniseries *Roots*, *The Love Boat*, *Magnum*
16 *P.I.*, *Amen*, *A Different World*, *MacGyver*, *Beverly Hills 90210*,
17 *L.A. Law*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Touched by an Angel*,
18 *Desperate Housewives*, *The Closer*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *The*
19 *Mentalist*, and *Chicago Fire*; more recently, he was a regular
20 cast member in BET's critically acclaimed series *Being Mary*
21 *Jane* from 2013 to 2019; and

22 WHEREAS, Richard Roundtree became a staunch advocate and
23 vocal proponent of male breast cancer awareness after being
24 diagnosed with breast cancer in 1993, having to undergo a

1 radical mastectomy and several rounds of chemotherapy to beat
2 the disease; he participated in countless benefits to help
3 fight cancer and was the recipient of the prestigious Jackie
4 Robinson Foundation Award for Excellence for his work in
5 cancer awareness; and

6 WHEREAS, Richard Roundtree received several nominations
7 and awards for his acting, including a 1972 Golden Globe Award
8 nomination for Most Promising Newcomer in the male category
9 for his role in the movie Shaft, a Lifetime Achievement Award
10 from MTV in 1994, and the Legacy Award from the
11 African-American Film Critics Association in 2011; he received
12 an honorary Doctorate of Performing Arts from SIU in 2018; and

13 WHEREAS, Richard Roundtree will be remembered for his
14 impact on film, pop culture, and cancer awareness; and

15 WHEREAS, Richard Roundtree is survived by his daughters,
16 Kelli, Nicole, Tayler, and Morgan, and his son, John;
17 therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
19 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
20 we mourn the passing of Richard Arnold Roundtree and extend
21 our sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all who
22 knew and loved him; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
2 presented to the family of Richard Roundtree as an expression
3 of our deepest sympathy.