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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the House of Representatives of the State of Illinois were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Vernon Jarrett on Sunday, May 23, 2004; and

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WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett was a leading African-American journalist whose reports and columns appeared in the Chicago Sun-Times, the Chicago Tribune, and the Chicago Daily Defender; and

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WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett was born in Paris, Tennessee; his father was a principal and his mother was a school teacher, they were children of former slaves; he graduated from Knoxville (Tennessee) College; and

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WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett covered a race riot on his first day as a reporter for the Chicago Defender in 1946, and was delighted to see his byline appear alongside those of the activist W.E.B. DuBois and poet Langston Hughes; from 1948 to 1951, Mr. Jarrett and composer Oscar Brown Jr. produced "Negro Newsfront", the nation's first daily radio broadcast created by African Americans; he also worked for the Associated Negro Press; and

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WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett became the Chicago Tribune's first African-American columnist in 1970; he used his editorial voice as a forum for commentary on the social and economic trends affecting African Americans and the global concerns of pan-African politics; in 1983, he took his column to the Chicago Sun-Times, where he served on the editorial board and worked until 1994; he was known to be a distinctive voice, not only for the African-American community, but for all of Chicago; in his position as a columnist for the Sun-Times, he was a mentor to any reporter who sought his counsel; and

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1 WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett produced nearly 2,000 broadcasts on
2 WLS-Channel 7; he always had a young student or intern
3 co-hosting with him; he was a founder of the National
4 Association of Black Journalists and served as its president
5 from 1977 to 1979; he was current president of the group's
6 Chicago chapter; also in 1977, he created the NAACP-sponsored
7 ACT-SO program, or Academic, Cultural, Technological, and
8 Scientific Olympics; ACT-SO has awarded more than \$1,000,000 in
9 scholarships, computers, and books to thousands of students; he
10 also served as a member of the editorial board of the NAACP's
11 90-year-old Crisis Magazine; in addition, he was a senior
12 fellow at the Great Cities Institute of the University of
13 Illinois at Chicago and taught history and journalism at other
14 colleges; and

15 WHEREAS, In 1998, Mr. Jarrett was inducted into the
16 National Literary Hall of Fame at the University of Chicago's
17 Gwendolyn Brooks Center; the National Academy of Television
18 Arts and Sciences awarded him its Silver Circle Award,
19 recognizing his 30 years of contributions to the medium; he was
20 honored with the first NAACP James Weldon Johnson Achievement
21 Award; and

22 WHEREAS, In recent years, Mr. Jarrett was a columnist for
23 the New York Times' New American News Syndicate and his social
24 commentary was heard during "The Jarrett Journal", a news
25 broadcast on WVON-AM, Chicago's only African-American owned
26 radio station; and

27 WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett had a passion for writing, was an avid
28 reader, especially of history, and was a chronicler of black
29 politics nationwide; he encouraged African-American children,
30 as well as everyone, to read; he also promoted the reading of
31 Carter G. Woodson's "The Miseducation of the Negro"; he wanted
32 to make sure young people would have opportunities in many
33 different fields; and

1 WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett made African Americans realize they
2 should be their very best and to make major contributions to
3 society;

4 WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett made a tremendous mark on African
5 Americans similar to that of Malcolm X, Justice Thurgood
6 Marshall, Mae Jemison, and Martin Luther King, Jr.; and

7 WHEREAS, The passing of Vernon Jarrett has been deeply felt
8 by many, especially his wife, Fernetta; his son, Thomas; and
9 his three grandchildren; therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
11 NINETY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
12 mourn the passing of Vernon Jarrett, a pioneer for
13 African-American journalists who demonstrated the highest
14 ideals of journalism and community responsibility; and be it
15 further

16 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
17 presented to the family of Vernon Jarrett as an expression of
18 our sincerest condolences during their time of bereavement.