



1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Penny Lee Severns and her identical twin sister,
3 Patty, were born on January 21, 1952 in Decatur, Illinois, the
4 daughters of Donald Severns, Sr. and Helen Severns; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1972, Penny Severns was an alternate at-large
6 delegate to the Democratic National Convention, the
7 then-youngest delegate ever elected; later in the year Penny
8 was elected to one of six spots from Illinois on the Democratic
9 National Committee; in 1974 she graduated from Southern
10 Illinois University in Carbondale with a Bachelor of Arts
11 degree in political science with a concentration in
12 international relations; and

13 WHEREAS, In 1977, Penny moved to Washington D.C. where she
14 was appointed to a prominent post with the United States State
15 Department; Penny served for two years as a Special Assistant
16 to the Administrator of the Agency for International
17 Development; Penny traveled to Thailand, Nepal, and India,
18 where she evaluated and audited the United States' mission in
19 those countries; and

20 WHEREAS, While working for the Agency for International
21 Development, Penny was given the opportunity to be a part of
22 history when she served as the Agency's Representative during
23 negotiations of the Camp David Peace Accords; Penny was in
24 attendance on the day the historic document was signed; and

25 WHEREAS, While in Washington, Penny Severns was a Resident
26 Associate at the Smithsonian Institution, where she met and
27 talked with some of the world's great architects and master
28 builders; Penny was fond of Frank Lloyd Wright and his work,
29 and is remembered as someone who helped in the preservation of
30 his work, particularly with the Dana-Thomas House in
31 Springfield; and

1 WHEREAS, Penny Severns resigned from the State Department
2 in 1979; she returned to Decatur and took a job with Archer
3 Daniels Midland; in 1980, Penny ran an unsuccessful campaign
4 for United States Congress against United States
5 Representative Edward Madigan; even though she lost the
6 election, the campaign gave Penny the opportunity to meet many
7 of the citizens of Central Illinois, and her increased
8 visibility helped her in future elections; in 1981, she worked
9 as an Administrative Assistant to the State Comptroller; in
10 1983, Penny Severns won a seat on the Decatur City Council with
11 the largest number of votes in the history of Decatur; and

12 WHEREAS, Penny Severns won the 51st District Senate seat in
13 1986; while serving her District, Senator Severns held the
14 position of Minority Caucus Whip, was a top budget negotiator,
15 and was minority spokesperson of the Revenue Committee; she
16 also served on the Executive Committee and the Legislative
17 Audit Commission; as a State Senator, Penny worked tirelessly
18 on behalf of the constituents in her district and was known as
19 a champion for the rights of working families, women, and
20 children throughout all Illinois; and

21 WHEREAS, In 1989, Senator Severns was selected from a
22 nationwide group of state and local lawmakers to participate as
23 a Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government;
24 the intensive program focused on the study of public policy;
25 her hard work earned her a position as a Toll Fellow to study
26 public policy with the National Council of State Legislatures
27 in Lexington, Kentucky; she was also selected as a Delegate by
28 the German Marshall Fund to study job training and vocational
29 education programs in Germany and Denmark; in 1994, Penny was
30 the Democratic nominee for Lieutenant Governor of Illinois; and

31 WHEREAS, Penny Severns spent the final months of her life
32 not only fighting cancer, but fighting for the people of

1 Illinois as a candidate for Secretary of State; and

2 WHEREAS, Penny Severns is also remembered through the Penny
3 Severns Summer Family Literacy program and the Penny Severns
4 Breast and Cervical Cancer Research Fund; therefore, be it

5 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
6 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
7 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that the portion of Interstate 72
8 lying between Springfield and Decatur be designated as the
9 Penny Severns Memorial Highway; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the Illinois Department of Transportation
11 is requested to erect at suitable locations, consistent with
12 State and federal regulations, appropriate plaques or signs
13 giving notice of the name; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be presented
15 to the Secretary of U.S. Department of Transportation; the
16 Secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation; and the
17 family of Senator Penny Severns.