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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the House of Representatives of the
3 State of Illinois learned with sadness of the death of
4 Lieutenant Colonel William R. Thompson, U.S.A.F (retired), on
5 Saturday, April 15, 2006; and

6 WHEREAS, William R. "Bill" Thompson was the youngest child
7 born to Rufus William Thompson and Sarah Ellen Fowler Thompson;
8 he attended Schenley High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania;
9 he graduated from Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia, in
10 1940 with a Bachelor of Science degree in business
11 administration; while at Hampton Institute, he completed
12 civilian pilot training and received his pilot's license; and

13 WHEREAS, After graduating from Hampton Institute, he moved
14 to Chicago to participate in the Coffey School of Aeronautics;
15 he met Vera Shane at the Chicago Urban League, where he
16 participated in the League's support of the Coffey School of
17 Aeronautics Program to include African Americans in the U.S.
18 Army Air Corps; Bill and Vera were married on September 21,
19 1942, and they shared 64 years of marriage; and

20 WHEREAS, In 1941, Mr. Thompson enlisted in the U.S. Army
21 Air Corps and was assigned to Chanute Air Base in Rantoul, as
22 one of six aviation cadets of the 99th Pursuit Squadron that
23 were trained in aircraft armaments, communications,
24 engineering, and maintenance; his specialty was armaments; he
25 trained in flight along with his squadron at Molten Field in
26 Tuskegee, Alabama, training that was referred to as the
27 Tuskegee "Experiment"; and

28 WHEREAS, Upon graduation from his training, he was promoted
29 to 1st Lieutenant and assigned to B.O. Davis Jr.'s staff as the
30 Aircraft Armament Officer, helping to form the 99th Fighter
31 Squadron, which became America's first all African-American

1 fighter squadron; the squadron was deployed overseas in World
2 War II, and during that time, he was promoted to Captain; and

3 WHEREAS, He was honorably discharged from active duty, but
4 continued his service as a member of the United States Air
5 Force Reserves; he continued learning and completed advanced
6 accounting courses at Northwestern University in 1950; he
7 received a teaching certificate from Chicago Teachers College
8 in 1954; he also completed the Academic Instructor program at
9 Air University, Maxwell Air Base, Alabama, for aviation and
10 education; for 25 years, he was a teacher and Master Teacher
11 for the Chicago Public School System, spending most of his
12 years at Donoghue Elementary School; and

13 WHEREAS, He enjoyed airplanes, renewed his pilot's
14 license, and co-owned a plane; he was a co-founder of the
15 Chicago Chapter of the American Pilot's Association; and

16 WHEREAS, He retired from the Reserves in 1976, with the
17 rank of Lieutenant Colonel; he retired from the Chicago Public
18 Schools in 1981; and

19 WHEREAS, During his retirement, he worked actively to
20 preserve the legacy and mission of the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.,
21 in many capacities and made many appearances in and outside of
22 the Chicago area sharing his experiences; and

23 WHEREAS, The passing of Mr. Thompson has been deeply felt
24 by many, especially his wife, Vera; his sons, William M.
25 (Wendy) and Kenneth (Carolyn); his granddaughter, Brianna; his
26 niece, Wilma J. Sewell; his many grand-nieces, nephews, and
27 their children; and numerous relatives and close friends; he
28 was preceded in death by his parents and his siblings, Frank
29 Maxwell Thompson, Zelma T. Johnson, and Alma E. Thompson;
30 therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
2 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
3 we mourn the passing of Lieutenant Colonel William R. Thompson,
4 and we extend our deepest sympathy to his family, friends, and
5 all who knew and loved him; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
7 presented to his family as an expression of our sincerest
8 condolences.