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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are pleased to congratulate B.J. Gaston on the
4 occasion of his retirement as Pastor of the Mt. Zion Baptist
5 Church in Zion after 47 years of dedicated service; and

6 WHEREAS, Bennie James Gaston is the sixth son born to
7 Rayfield and Dasie Gaston; at the age of 11, B.J. Gaston
8 accepted Christ as his personal savior; he was united in holy
9 matrimony to Rose Broome on June 25, 1957; and

10 WHEREAS, At the age of 20, B.J. Gaston entered the United
11 States Army and was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division;
12 after serving for two years, he was given an honorable
13 discharge; and

14 WHEREAS, Pastor Gaston completed a two-year program at
15 Concordia Bible College in Milwaukee; he also earned a bachelor
16 of theology degree and a master of divinity degree from
17 McKinley Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi and has
18 been awarded doctor of divinity, doctor of laws, and doctor of
19 humane letters degrees from the Tennessee School of Religion;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, Pastor Gaston accepted the divine call into the

1 ministry in 1957; he preached his first sermon on April 5,
2 1957, at the Tabernacle Community Baptist Church in Milwaukee,
3 Wisconsin under the leadership of the now deceased Rev. J. L.
4 Williams; in 1959, he was ordained as a gospel preacher and was
5 also elected assistant pastor of Tabernacle Community Baptist
6 Church, where he served faithfully; in 1964, he was called to
7 pastor the Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Zion, where he has served
8 his congregation, the community, and God faithfully for 47
9 years; and

10 WHEREAS, During Pastor Gaston's tenure, Mt. Zion Baptist
11 Church has undergone numerous substantial improvements; the
12 church has grown in membership from 40 to over 1,000; the
13 church's Mt. Zion Sheila Day Care Center, church edifice, and
14 Mt. Zion multi-purpose building were built, furnished, and paid
15 off; the church received \$1.2 million from HUD and built the
16 B.J. Gaston Bethesda Village 40-unit elderly and handicapped
17 complex; the Mt. Zion Credit Union, a charter member of the
18 Illinois State Credit Union League, was created; the church
19 also started its own website under his leadership; and

20 WHEREAS, Pastor Gaston served as president of the North
21 Shore Baptist Ministers' Alliance for a total of 21 years;
22 under his leadership, the organization started the Martin
23 Luther King, Jr. memorial service, the tri-city revival, and
24 Good Friday services; he is the President and founder of the

1 North Shore Bible College and Theological Seminary, Inc., now
2 called the North Shore Theological Seminary, Inc.; he is also a
3 past vice-moderator of the New Era District Fellowship (Chicago
4 vicinity) and a member of the National Urban League, the NAACP,
5 and the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.; and

6 WHEREAS, Pastor Gaston has been the recipient of numerous
7 awards and honors for his service in his community; in 1981, he
8 received a proclamation from the City of Waukegan; in 1987, he
9 received the keys to the City of Zion from Mayor Howard
10 Everline; in 1990, he received a resolution of commendation
11 from Zion Mayor Adeline Geo-Karis and an outstanding community
12 service designation from Illinois State Representative John
13 Matejevich; in 1997, he received the keys to the City of North
14 Chicago from Mayor Bobby Thompson; that same year, he received
15 an honorary street sign from the City of Zion and was named the
16 most influential African-American of Lake County by People's
17 Voice; in 1999, he was listed in the Nationwide Register's
18 Who's Who in Executives and Businesses 2000-2001 edition; in
19 2004, he was named Man of the Year by the American Biographical
20 Institute, USA and received a letter of congratulations from
21 the office of Governor Rod Blagojevich; and

22 WHEREAS, Pastor Gaston serves as a model of hard work,
23 integrity, and dedication for the people of the State of
24 Illinois; therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
2 NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
3 we congratulate B.J. Gaston on the occasion of his retirement
4 and wish him many happy and healthy retirement years; and be it
5 further

6 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
7 presented to B.J. Gaston as a symbol of our esteem and respect.