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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Silver and bighead carp, also known as "Asian carp", are considered invasive species in the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers; Asian carp can consume plankton at an alarming rate, with bighead carp sometimes growing to over 5 feet in length and weighing 100 pounds or more; and

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WHEREAS, Asian carp females can carry over 2 million eggs at a time; and

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WHEREAS, Asian carp grow quickly such that adults exceed the gape size of all but the largest predators; and

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WHEREAS, Asian carp are voracious eaters, consuming up to 20% of their body weight per day in plankton; they compete with native fish species for food and can quickly overtake native populations of fish in our rivers, lakes, and streams; and

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WHEREAS, Policymakers, scientists, natural resource professionals, the fishing industry, and citizens are extremely concerned about the spread of Asian carp to the Great Lakes; Illinois' \$15 billion-dollar shipping industry has been threatened through ongoing legal actions by neighboring Great Lakes states in an attempt to close Chicago's navigation locks, a possible point for Asian carp to access Lake Michigan; and

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1 WHEREAS, Over the past 2 years, efforts by the Illinois
2 Department of Natural Resources (the Department), through
3 contracts with Illinois commercial fishermen, have netted the
4 removal of over 415 tons of bighead and silver Asian carp from
5 the Illinois River; in some cases, commercial fishers in the
6 Illinois River have caught tens of thousands of pounds of Asian
7 carp in a single day; and

8 WHEREAS, At the same time Asian carp are processed into
9 fertilizers or pet foods, America's food banks are experiencing
10 a significant need for healthy, protein-rich food sources
11 capable of meeting the increasing demands of communities of
12 need; and

13 WHEREAS, In a 2011 Public Health Opinion to the Department,
14 the Illinois Department of Public Health determined that using
15 Asian carp as a food source "could be beneficial" and "not
16 expected to pose a public health hazard."; furthermore, the
17 Department of Public Health stated: "Fish tissue data currently
18 available for Asian carp caught from the Mississippi River and
19 lower Illinois River would place many of these fish in the
20 'unlimited consumption' category"; and

21 WHEREAS, Asian carp are high in protein and healthy Omega-3
22 fatty acids; additionally, since they only eat plankton and are

1 not bottom feeders, Asian carp are low in mercury and other
2 contaminants; and

3 WHEREAS, The Department established Target Hunger Now!,
4 one of the largest humanitarian efforts ever undertaken by the
5 State, to encourage hunters and commercial anglers to donate
6 deer and Asian carp, respectively, for processing into healthy,
7 ready-to-serve meals; partnering with Feeding Illinois,
8 Illinois American Water, and other corporate, not-for-profit,
9 and governmental partners, the Department is innovatively
10 feeding communities and lessening the Asian carp threat to our
11 waterways; the program has already served more than 2,200 meals
12 to people in need; and

13 WHEREAS, On Thursday, January 26, 2012, the Department
14 brought the Target Hunger Now! program to Peoria's South Side
15 Mission where delicious Asian carp meals were prepared and
16 served to children, adults, and families; Peoria is located on
17 the banks of the Illinois River, where Asian carp are found in
18 abundance; and

19 WHEREAS, Many small Illinois businesses, including meat
20 and fish processing plants and large commercial fishing crews,
21 will add jobs to meet the increased demand for processed Asian
22 carp; the success of Target Hunger Now! and other similar
23 programs will create a demand for Asian carp and drive market

1 opportunities that will create job opportunities in multiple
2 industries; and

3 WHEREAS, Using Asian carp as a healthy food source is a
4 major step towards eradication of the fish in Illinois waters,
5 providing a healthy and delicious meal for our citizens,
6 protecting the waterway shipping industry from forced closures
7 of our locks and dam systems, and adding new jobs in many
8 sectors of Illinois' economy, including the fishing,
9 processing, and transportation industries; and

10 WHEREAS, Public and media perception of this fish species
11 must change if they are to be effectively used as a quality
12 food source at not only food banks, but by all Illinoisans;
13 therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL
15 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, That we urge the Department
16 to continue building strong partnerships with Feeding
17 Illinois, Illinois American Water, and other corporate,
18 not-for-profit, and governmental entities and to continue
19 employing creative solutions, including Target Hunger Now!, to
20 battle the Asian carp problem in our waterways while providing
21 a protein-rich, low-mercury meal for Illinoisans; and be it
22 further

1 RESOLVED, That we urge further use of Asian carp as a
2 healthy food source as well as the development of markets for
3 the catch, processing, and distribution of Illinois' Asian
4 carp, thereby reducing the overpopulation of Asian carp in our
5 waterways, promoting Illinois' commercial fishing industry,
6 protecting Illinois' shipping industry, creating new jobs for
7 our citizens, and forming new international export
8 partnerships; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
10 presented to the President of the United States, the Governor
11 of the State of Illinois, the Director of the Illinois
12 Department of Natural Resources, the members of the Illinois
13 congressional delegation, the Governors of the Great Lakes
14 states of Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio,
15 Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, and the Minister of Natural
16 Resources for the Government of Ontario.