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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened to learn of the death of Ora A. Higgins, who passed away on July 25, 2012, at the age of 101, surrounded by her family; and

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WHEREAS, Ora Higgins was born on September 24, 1910, in Birmingham, Alabama; she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in personnel administration and a Master's degree in business law from Northwestern University; and

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WHEREAS, Ora Higgins was hired to serve as the first African-American personnel director for Spiegel's, Inc., and was tasked with integrating its workforce, teaching executives and managers the value of diversity, and breaking down racial myths and barriers to the participation of people of color in the workplace; and

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WHEREAS, Ora Higgins' talents were soon recognized by downtown department stores, who asked her to replicate her successful program, which she did while insisting on equal pay and equal opportunities for African-Americans and encouraging those around her, including the Reverend Harold E. Bailey, to complete their education; and

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WHEREAS, Ora Higgins devoted herself to the causes of civil

1 rights, peace, education, employment, and the alleviation of
2 poverty; during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, she spoke
3 to the United States Department of Labor on the topic of race,
4 poverty, and a call to peace; in 1976 she founded the Ora
5 Higgins Youth Foundation, which has awarded over \$500,000 in
6 scholarships to Chicago-area high school graduates and each
7 year recognizes outstanding community leaders; and

8 WHEREAS, Ora Higgins took a leadership role in a large
9 number of civil rights, professional, and community
10 organizations and served as the national chairperson for Women
11 in Industry; and

12 WHEREAS, Ora Higgins received numerous awards including
13 the Distinguished Service Award from the Tuskegee Institute and
14 an award from the Chicago Association of Commerce; and

15 WHEREAS, Ora Higgins is survived by her daughter, Dr.
16 Murrell Higgins Duster, and her son, Rev. William "Chico"
17 Higgins, 13 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren, and 3
18 great-great-grandchildren; she was also the great-great-aunt
19 of First Lady Michelle Obama; therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL
21 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
22 Ora Higgins, and we extend our sincere condolences to her

1 family, friends, and all who knew and loved her; and be it
2 further

3 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
4 presented to the family of Ora A. Higgins as an expression of
5 our sympathy.