

1 HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives wish to express their sincere condolences to
4 the family and friends of Richard E. Cunningham, who passed
5 away on March 1, 2001; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Cunningham was one of the most accomplished
7 death penalty defense attorneys in the State of Illinois,
8 having attained relief for numerous clients at all stages of
9 capital litigation, including direct review and
10 post-conviction review in State court, and habeas corpus
11 review in federal court; Mr. Cunningham represented indigent
12 clients in both capital and non-capital cases in every
13 district of the Illinois appellate court, and before the
14 federal district courts in Northern and Central Illinois, the
15 Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, Mr. Cunningham worked diligently to establish
18 the innocence and eventual exoneration of Ronald Jones, one
19 of 13 men wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death in
20 Illinois; he obtained new trials or sentencing hearings for
21 death row clients in several other cases; and at the time of
22 his death, had obtained temporary relief in 5 of his 10
23 pending death penalty cases; and

24 WHEREAS, Mr. Cunningham gave every client the highest
25 quality of representation without regard to fees, never
26 abandoning a client when no longer being paid and when others
27 may have thought continued representation to be futile; and

28 WHEREAS, Mr. Cunningham epitomized the highest calling of
29 the legal profession, treating each client with the dignity
30 and compassion he believed all human beings deserve,
31 regardless of their station in life or the accusations they
32 faced; and

1 WHEREAS, In 2000, the Office of the State Appellate
2 Defender honored Mr. Cunningham with a Career Achievement
3 Award for a lifetime of dedication to the defense of capital
4 clients; and

5 WHEREAS, Mr. Cunningham, through his dedication and
6 mentoring, had a profound influence on the careers of scores
7 of public defenders and appellate defenders across the State
8 of Illinois; and

9 WHEREAS, Mr. Cunningham served as an inspiration and
10 vital resource for attorneys in many capital cases in which
11 he was not directly involved, through responding to calls for
12 advice, assisting students and investigators, and speaking at
13 numerous capital defense seminars; and

14 WHEREAS, Mr. Cunningham was dedicated to the movement to
15 repeal the death penalty in Illinois through his work with
16 the Illinois Coalition against the Death Penalty and the
17 Illinois Death Penalty Moratorium Project, having testified
18 before the House Task Force on Capital Punishment and the
19 Governor's Commission on the Death Penalty; and having
20 submitted a petition to the Illinois Supreme Court on behalf
21 of the Black Caucus of the Illinois House of Representatives
22 in 1999, asking the Court to impose a moratorium on
23 executions in the State; and

24 WHEREAS, The passing of Richard Cunningham will be deeply
25 felt by all who knew and loved him, especially his wife,
26 Maria; his children, Sarah, Jesse, and Maria Elena; his
27 sisters, Mary Cunningham and Margaret Williams; his brothers,
28 James, Thomas, William, and Timothy; and his many friends and
29 colleagues; therefore, be it

30 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
31 NINETY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
32 we mourn, along with all who knew him, the death of Richard

1 E. Cunningham; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be

3 presented to the family of Richard E. Cunningham.