



SR0231

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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 Helen Miller, who passed away on March 5, 2019; and

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WHEREAS, Helen Miller was born in Louisville, Mississippi on May 26, 1936; she graduated from Central Colored High School in Louisville (now Central High School) in 1955 and moved to Chicago; and

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WHEREAS, Helen Miller began working in industrial laundries and worked in laundries for over 15 years; in the late 70s, she began working as a homecare provider for the City of Chicago and State of Illinois' Department of Rehabilitation Services; she later worked for private agencies caring for seniors under the State's Community Care Program; she retired in 2007; and

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WHEREAS, In 1984, Helen Miller became active with the then-fledgling Local 880 of the United Labor Unions; she served in every capacity, including as a rank-and-file member, a member-organizer, a steward, a political organizer, and then as an officer; she became treasurer in 1986, vice-president in 1989, and president in 1999, serving until her retirement in 2007; she retired as the longest serving president in the

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1 history of Local 880; in addition, she was elected to the SEIU
2 Illinois Council in 1999 and as sergeant-at-arms in 2003; and

3 WHEREAS, Helen Miller was continuously involved in the
4 fight for higher wages for homecare workers and childcare
5 providers; she also took part in the fight against predatory
6 lending, utility shutoffs, and for a living wage in Chicago and
7 statewide; and

8 WHEREAS, Helen Miller was elected to the SEIU International
9 Executive Board at its convention in 2004, the first homecare
10 worker to serve on the SEIU International Executive Board; and

11 WHEREAS, Helen Miller was also active politically; she
12 frequently knocked on doors to get out the vote, oversaw phone
13 banks, and interviewed candidates for office; in 1995, she led
14 Local 880's endorsement for Barack Obama when he first
15 announced his intent to run for State Senate; she worked on
16 several of his State Senate and Congressional campaigns, as
17 well as his run for U.S. Senate in 2004; on the date of her
18 retirement in 2007, then-Senator Obama sent her a
19 congratulatory letter noting how honored he was to have worked
20 with her and how her work improved the lives of thousands; and

21 WHEREAS, Helen Miller was the 2004 recipient of the Ms.
22 Foundation's GLORIA award and a 2005 recipient of the Women's

1 E-News award for her leadership in ensuring that homecare
2 workers are "invisible no more"; she received the Operation
3 PUSH Bridge Builder Award presented by Rev. Jesse Jackson at
4 the PUSH convention in June 2005; and

5 WHEREAS, Helen Miller served in her church in Chicago and
6 the Bethany Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Mississippi;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, In 2003, Helen Miller and her co-workers signed
9 their first collective bargaining agreement with the State of
10 Illinois; she led busloads of members into the Capitol Building
11 and up to the Governor's office singing one of her favorite
12 songs, Victory Is Mine; her Local had its greatest period of
13 growth during her presidency, growing from seven members to
14 70,000; she campaigned vigorously for higher pay and health
15 care and benefits for many groups in Chicago, in Illinois,
16 across the Midwest, the East and West Coasts and in the South;
17 therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL
19 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
20 Helen Miller and extend our sincere condolences to her family,
21 friends, and all who knew and loved her; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be

1 presented to the family of Helen Miller as an expression of our
2 deepest sympathy.