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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, It is important to understand the history of the United States and those who played a significant role in that history, blazing trails for those to come; all too often, some of those figures are lost to history, and so it is fitting to recognize those who dedicate themselves to its preservation; and

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WHEREAS, Maggie Walker was born Maggie Lena Mitchell on July 15, 1864 in Richmond, Virginia, on an estate owned by an abolitionist; her mother was a former slave working at the estate as a cook and her stepfather was the butler; she was educated as a teacher and taught at Lancaster School until her marriage to Armstead Walker Jr. in September of 1886; and

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WHEREAS, At the age of 14, Maggie Walker became a member of the Grand United Order of St. Luke, an African American fraternal organization established to assure proper health care and burial arrangements to its members and to encourage self-help and racial solidarity; in 1899, she became the Executive Secretary-Treasurer; and

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WHEREAS, Maggie Walker began publishing a newsletter, The St. Luke Herald, to increase awareness of the organization and help in the educational work of the Order; the following year,

1 she opened the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank and became its first
2 president; and

3 WHEREAS, Maggie Walker spread tools of economic
4 independence in the days of Jim Crow and she hired and trained
5 African American women at a time when even white women
6 struggled for opportunities; and

7 WHEREAS, Maggie Walker passed away in Richmond, Virginia on
8 December 15, 1934; her house is now a National Historic Site;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, In early 2009, a group of students from the
11 College of William and Mary, while exploring the attic of an
12 old building, came across piles of documents from the 1920s and
13 1930s from businesses owned by the Order of St. Luke; included
14 in the find were letters to and from Maggie Walker; and

15 WHEREAS, Over the next eight years, a group of 16
16 volunteers, calling themselves The Maggie Walker Community,
17 headed by William and Mary professor Heather Huyck, examined,
18 organized, and preserved the documents; the diverse group of
19 black, white, and Asian women, between the ages of 50 to 89,
20 forged deep bonds while understanding the challenges of race
21 and gender in the early 20th century, especially the role of
22 black women as community builders and organizers; therefore, be

1 it

2 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
3 HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
4 recognize Maggie Lena Walker, an African American icon and the
5 first African American woman to charter and become President of
6 a bank in the United States; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That we salute the members of The Maggie Walker
8 Community for their years of dedication to the preservation of
9 materials related to the amazing life and legacy of Maggie
10 Walker; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
12 presented to Heather Huyck and The Maggie Walker Community, the
13 Community Bankers Association of Illinois, the Abraham Lincoln
14 Presidential Library and Museum, the National Museum of
15 African-American History and Culture, the National Civil
16 Rights Museum, the Springfield African-American Historical
17 Museum, and the DuSable Museum of African-American History as a
18 symbol of our esteem and respect.