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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 Lewis Myers Jr., who passed away on May 24, 2018; and

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WHEREAS, Lewis Myers was born in Houston, Texas and graduated with honors from Phillis Wheatley High School in 1965, where he was recognized in Who's Who Among Students in American High Schools; he was elected NAACP Youth Council President for the Houston branch and led student demonstrations that helped integrate the Houston Independent School District; and

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WHEREAS, Lewis Myers studied at Tennessee State University, where he joined the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (S.N.C.C.) Chapter; he also became chairman of the Students Rights Organization Chapter at Tennessee State; he transferred to Howard University, and in 1968, was elected president of the Undergraduate Student Council; he was recognized in Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities in 1969; and

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WHEREAS, Lewis Myers entered law school at Rutgers University; he later transferred to the University of Mississippi, which allowed him to work in rural Mississippi and

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1 expand his civil rights work; he earned his law degree from the
2 University of Mississippi in 1972; he was a student assistant
3 to famed constitutional and civil rights lawyer Herbert Reid
4 who was the former Dean of the Law School at Howard University,
5 as well as Chief Counsel to legendary Congressman Adam Clayton
6 Powell Jr. from New York; and

7 WHEREAS, In 1971, Lewis Myers worked with what was then
8 called the Goldberg Commission in New York City; he served as
9 an assistant on the staff and visited many of the cities where
10 the Black Panther Party had been involved in confrontations
11 with the local police departments; and

12 WHEREAS, Lewis Myers accepted a Reginald Heber Smith
13 Fellowship, which enabled him to work with a civil rights legal
14 services program across the United States; he was selected to
15 work in Mississippi, where he started working as a staff
16 attorney with North Mississippi Rural Legal Services in Oxford;
17 initially, he handled school desegregation cases; however,
18 within a year of his graduation from law school, he filed suit
19 on behalf of African American law students at the University in
20 the case of Robinson vs. University of Mississippi; the lawsuit
21 challenged the University's historic policies of racial
22 discrimination and exclusion of African Americans from
23 admission to its law school and subsequently opened up the
24 admissions process which has allowed many African American

1 students to complete their education since that time; and

2 WHEREAS, Lewis Myers became Director of Litigation in
3 charge of more than 45 lawyers and 40 paralegals; he was
4 responsible for managing seven legal service offices
5 throughout cities in Northern Mississippi and the Mississippi
6 Delta; he initiated numerous lawsuits challenging racial
7 discrimination in municipal governments and in private
8 employment practices in the State of Mississippi; in 1973, he
9 was one of the lawyers that filed the historic case of Ayers
10 vs. Mississippi which ultimately led to the desegregation of
11 institutions of higher learning in the United States after
12 reaching the United States Supreme Court; between 1974 and
13 1976, he was on the cutting edge of filing more than six
14 lawsuits against county jails in the State of Mississippi for
15 inhumane conditions and the treatment of their inmates; and

16 WHEREAS, Lewis Myers was involved in numerous historic
17 cases, including the case of New Jersey vs. Joanne Chesmard
18 a/k/a Assata Shakur-mother of Tupac Shakur, the United States
19 vs. Rene Leon, and the Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt case; he served
20 as counsel for seven young boys who were expelled from the
21 Decatur public schools after a fight at a football game; and

22 WHEREAS, Lewis Myers served as general counsel for several
23 national civil rights leaders, including Minister Louis

1 Farrakhan, Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, and Rev. Al Sharpton; he
2 served as chief operating officer and the national deputy
3 director of the NAACP in Baltimore; in August of 1993, he
4 served as national deputy coordinator of the historic 30th
5 anniversary for the March on Washington; and

6 WHEREAS, Lewis Myers was one of the top litigation lawyers
7 in the Chicago area; he taught Evidence and Trial Advocacy as
8 an adjunct professor at DePaul University's School of Law in
9 Chicago; he taught at several Chicago City Colleges and served
10 as director of the Criminal Justice Program at Kennedy King
11 College; he was also a professor teaching Criminal Justice at
12 Chicago State University; and

13 WHEREAS, Lewis Myers was a member of the Illinois Bar, the
14 Bar of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, the Bar of the
15 Federal Appellate Court for the Third Circuit, the Bar for the
16 Federal Appellate Court for the Fifth Circuit, the Bar of the
17 United States Federal District Court for the Northern District
18 of California, and the Bar for the Federal Court of Claims; he
19 was a member of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the
20 National Lawyers' Guild (Executive Board, Chicago Chapter),
21 the National Bar Association, the National Association of
22 Criminal Defense Attorneys, and the National Conference of
23 Black Lawyers (Chairperson, Chicago Chapter); he held
24 memberships with several professional organizations, including

1 Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, the NAACP (Life Member), 500 Black
2 Men (Founder of Chicago Chapter), Black Men's Forum, and the
3 American Historical Association; he was the recipient of many
4 accolades and awards; he was listed in several Who's Who
5 publications and was recognized as one of the most influential
6 African Americans in the United States in various national
7 publications; and

8 WHEREAS, Lewis Myers is survived by his wife, Celestine
9 Narcisse-Myers, and his son, Lewis Myers III; therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDREDTH GENERAL
11 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
12 Lewis Myers Jr., and extend our sincere condolences to his
13 family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be it
14 further

15 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
16 presented to the family of Lewis Myers as an expression of our
17 deepest sympathy.