



HR0638

LRB101 16108 MST 65538 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives wish to recognize Richard Theodore Greener, the first African American graduate of Harvard College; and

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WHEREAS, Richard Greener was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on January 30, 1844; he quit school in his mid-teens to earn money for his family, but one of his employers helped him enroll in preparatory school at Oberlin College; he graduated from Phillips Academy in 1865 and spent three years at Oberlin College before transferring to Harvard College; his admission to Harvard was "an experiment" by the administration and paved the way for more black graduates of Harvard; he graduated from Harvard College in 1870; and

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WHEREAS, In 1875, Richard Greener became the first African American to be elected as a member of the American Philological Association; he graduated from law school at South Carolina University and practiced law in South Carolina and then Washington, D.C. before joining the Howard University School of Law as a professor and eventually dean; and

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WHEREAS, In 1875, Richard Greener was chosen by the General Assembly of South Carolina to be a member of a commission to revise the South Carolina school system; in 1880, he became a

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1 law clerk of the first comptroller of the United States  
2 Treasury; from 1876 to 1879, he represented South Carolina in  
3 the Union League of America and was president of the South  
4 Carolina Republican Association in 1887; from 1885 to 1892, he  
5 served as secretary of the Grant Monument Association, where he  
6 is credited with having led the initial fundraising effort that  
7 eventually brought in donations from 90,000 people worldwide to  
8 construct Grant's Tomb, still the largest mausoleum in North  
9 America; from 1885 to 1890, he was chief examiner of the civil  
10 service board for New York City and County; in the 1896  
11 election, he served as the head of the Colored Bureau of the  
12 National Republican Party in Chicago; in 1898, he was appointed  
13 as the United States Commercial Agent in Vladivostok, Russia;  
14 he left the foreign service in 1905; and

15 WHEREAS, Richard Greener received several awards and  
16 recognitions; while at Harvard in 1868 and 1870, he earned the  
17 Bowdoin Prize; he received two honorary Doctorates of Laws, one  
18 from Monrovia College in Liberia in 1882 and the other from  
19 Howard University in 1907; in 1902, the Chinese government  
20 decorated him with the Order of the Double Dragon; Phillips  
21 Academy has the Richard T. Greener 1865 Endowed Scholarship;  
22 the University of South Carolina's Black Alumni Council  
23 sponsors the Richard T. Greener Endowment Fund; the central  
24 quadrangle at Phillips Academy was named in his honor in 2018,  
25 and the University of South Carolina is honoring his legacy by

1 erecting a statue; and

2 WHEREAS, Richard Greener eventually settled in Chicago,  
3 where he worked for an insurance company and practiced law and  
4 occasionally lectured on his life and times; his Harvard  
5 diploma and other personal papers were rediscovered in an attic  
6 on the South Side of Chicago in 2009; therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
8 HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
9 we recognize Richard Theodore Greener, the first African  
10 American graduate of Harvard College; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
12 presented to the family of Richard Greener as a symbol of our  
13 respect and esteem.