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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 Reverend Richard Billings of Oak Park, who passed away on February 18, 2019 at the age of 94; and

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WHEREAS, Reverend Billings was born on August 30, 1924 on a farm near Wyandot, Ohio; and

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WHEREAS, Reverend Billings completed grade school in a one-room schoolhouse; he went to high school in the town of Bucyrus and furthered his education at Ohio State University in Columbus, where he was drafted into military service; and

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WHEREAS, Reverend Billings served three years of military service in the Pacific, where he was torpedoed and endured other horrors of war; he was discharged in January of 1946; and

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WHEREAS, Reverend Billings finished his degree in fine arts and education while working as a waiter; he then worked in the fashion industry and became a high-fashion designer with a shop on Oak Street in Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood; and

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WHEREAS, Reverend Billings sold the boutique shop and travelled to Unity Village in Missouri to train at the Unity School of Christianity, where he became an ordained Unity

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1 minister; his ministry service took him to Santa Monica,
2 California and Detroit and Lansing, Michigan, before he moved
3 to Oak Park in the summer of 1967; and

4 WHEREAS, Reverend Billings served as minister of Unity of
5 Oak Park for 50 years and taught at Unity School; he was
6 responsible for the existence of four other Unity Centers in
7 the Chicagoland area, as well as at least 50 liaison
8 interventions throughout the U.S. "putting troubled centers
9 back on course"; and

10 WHEREAS, When Reverend Billings began his ministry in Oak
11 Park, 35 people purchased a fixer-upper mansion intended to be
12 the church's building; it was paid for, improved upon, and
13 regularly drew an attendance of 400-500 congregants and had a
14 mailing list of 1,800; and

15 WHEREAS, During Reverend Billings ministry, Unity of Oak
16 Park became a healing ministry, attracting people who wanted to
17 improve themselves and their understanding of life; he took
18 congregants on regular trips to at least 70 countries, taught
19 at Unity School, and was a guest speaker for many centers,
20 including at his good friend Johnnie Colman's center on the
21 South Side; he spoke in Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center for
22 a crowd of over 2,000 on three occasions, once with Maya
23 Angelou; and

1 WHEREAS, Later in his life and due to health issues,
2 Reverend Billings tailored his ministry to include counseling
3 on Fridays and Saturdays; he continued to raise nearly \$60,000
4 to help the center using "truth principles"; and

5 WHEREAS, In September of 2017, Reverend Billings's tenure
6 at the center ended; he penned a biography titled My Soul
7 Remembers, where he writes, "For some of us, the search goes on
8 half-heartedly; for others, it is a serious business. We all
9 have our moments."; therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL
11 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
12 Reverend Richard Billings and extend our sincere condolences to
13 his 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 Reverend Richard Billings as an
17 expression of our deepest sympathy.