



HR0150

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Josie B. Childs of Chicago, who passed away on February 13, 2023; and

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WHEREAS, Josie Childs was a vibrant, no-nonsense, dynamic, and highly engaging 96-year-old South Side Chicagoan whose entire life encompassed both a historical and present-day living memoir of influential, insightful, and inspirational importance; she was a beloved citizen, a faithful woman, a friend of multitudes, and the founder and president of the Chicago-based nonprofit, the Mayor Harold Washington Legacy Committee (MHWLC); further, she was an exemplary woman who was celebrated and widely respected as a civic institution by generations of Chicagoans for her visionary leadership, serving as inspiration to multigenerational trailblazers of political, business, and community leaders, emerging, next-generation advocates, and future change-agents; and

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WHEREAS, Josie Childs was born to Julia Brown and Charles Washington in Clarksdale, Mississippi on October 13, 1926; her grandparents were Black southern landowners and teachers; although born in Clarksdale, she grew up in Memphis, Tennessee and Vicksburg, Tennessee; after graduating high school and attending LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis, Tennessee, she

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1 moved to Chicago in the late 1940s and married James "Jack"
2 Childs Sr., who preceded her in death; she was a founding
3 member of The Congregational Church of Park Manor, UCC, where
4 both she and her husband were lifelong members until their
5 respective passing; they were worldwide travelers, partners in
6 church, social, and civic activities, and lovers of fine
7 dining, the theater, the arts, card games, and jazz music;
8 their massive dining room table served as the setting for the
9 coordination and implementation of many successful Chicago
10 political campaigns, civic engagement and community plans, and
11 other events; and

12 WHEREAS, Josie Childs worked on the congressional
13 campaigns of Abner Mikva, Ralph Metcalfe, Rod Blagojevich, and
14 Harold Washington; she was an Illinois organizer for the
15 presidential campaigns of Adlai Stevenson Sr., John F.
16 Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Jimmy Carter; she was also an
17 Illinois Democratic delegate at the 1980 Democratic National
18 Convention (DNC) in New York City; she worked with the late
19 Honorable Harold Washington on his original 1977 mayoral
20 campaign and his successful 1983 mayoral campaign; following
21 his historic election, she served in administrative positions
22 with the City of Chicago's Special Events and Cultural Affairs
23 departments for many years; and

24 WHEREAS, Josie Childs served as a passionate, stabilizing

1 social force during turbulent times in Chicago and the United
2 States, when rampant social change was on the horizon
3 virtually every week, and into recent similar civic
4 incursions; while simultaneously fighting for causes in which
5 she believed, she additionally advised, nurtured, and
6 represented new generations of Black and multicultural
7 activist objectors from the neighborhoods of Chicago; over the
8 years, her reputation for dedication, fairness, integrity, and
9 accuracy grew exponentially; she was also revered for her deep
10 personal concern and commitment to the overall community as
11 well as her unique ability to establish lasting relationships
12 among high-level local and nationally elected public servants,
13 business leaders, and cultural influencers, in addition to
14 everyday community leaders and residents; and

15 WHEREAS, Josie Childs was a cultural, arts-focused, and
16 progressive political firebrand; she exposed many young people
17 to programs she supported at such institutions as Columbia
18 College Chicago, the Goodman Theater, and Harold Washington
19 College; she also encouraged youth to become civic-minded and
20 involved in ongoing efforts of political organizers, striving
21 towards a more just and equitable Chicago; and

22 WHEREAS, Josie Childs remained active throughout her
23 entire life; in 2013, she partnered with a coalition of local
24 political and civic activists to establish the Mayor Harold

1 Washington Legacy Committee (MHWLC), a 501(c)3 nonprofit
2 organization that is an educational and civic engagement
3 entity, which is dedicated to preserving the integrity and
4 authenticity of the progressive policy messages of former
5 Chicago Mayor Harold Washington; through her efforts, the
6 MHWLC established the Mayor Harold Washington Legacy
7 Scholarship at his alma mater, Roosevelt University, among
8 other initiatives, and it continues to amplify the memory and
9 historical legacy of this great political statesman and
10 Chicago's first Black mayor for generations of change-agents
11 today and tomorrow; her date of passing, February 13, 2023,
12 has gained further significance to many local leaders and
13 activists as Chicago concludes its year-long centennial
14 celebration of the late Mayor Harold Washington's birth and as
15 the city approaches the 40th anniversary of his historical
16 1983 election as Chicago's first Black mayor; and

17 WHEREAS, Josie Childs was involved with many
18 organizations, including the Chicago Urban League, the
19 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
20 (NAACP), the Board of the Friends of the Chicago Public
21 Library, Planned Parenthood, T.R.U.S.T. Inc., the Board of
22 Know Your Chicago, the Joint Negro Appeal, the National Board
23 of Council on Lay Life and Work, the Duke Ellington Society,
24 the Executive Service Corps, and the Christ Hospital Nursing
25 School; she was also the former president of her condominium

1 board; and

2 WHEREAS, Josie Childs was the recipient of numerous awards
3 and honors; in 2013, she was honored by Congressman Danny K.
4 Davis with the Georgia Palmer Advocacy Award; she was last
5 honored in February of 2019 by the DuSable Museum of
6 African-American History and Comcast as one of the "Voices of
7 the Civil Rights Movement"; she had also recently donated the
8 Josie Brown Childs Papers, a collection of documents
9 consisting of her family history, her political and social
10 advocacy work, and her efforts to promote enhanced awareness
11 of African American cultural and historical achievements, to
12 the Chicago Public Library; and

13 WHEREAS, Josie Childs was exceptionally respected and
14 popular all over the City of Chicago but particularly on the
15 South Side, maintaining an impressively large base of
16 supporters among multicultural coalition groups and women; she
17 was a fierce and vocal advocate for Black political
18 empowerment in Chicago and across the United States and a
19 trailblazing woman focused on power and equality; she
20 possessed a suave, confident persona and a never give up or
21 give in approach, perfected as a longtime South Side resident,
22 aptly earning the title as the "Matriarch of the Movement";
23 her undeniable passion, contagious spirit, and tireless
24 dedication will be missed; and

1 WHEREAS, Josie Childs is survived by her son, James M.
2 (Bonnie Collins) Childs Jr.; her grandchildren, James A.
3 Childs, Claudia L. (Adrien Houndje) Houndje, and Elysia R. (L.
4 Almestica) Childs; her great-grandchildren, Semenou, Mense,
5 Fifa, and Hontongou Houndje; and countless friends,
6 associates, public officials, church members, and admirers;
7 therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
9 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
10 we mourn the passing of Josie B. Childs and extend our sincere
11 condolences to her family, friends, and all who knew and loved
12 her; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
14 presented to the family of Josie Childs as an expression of our
15 deepest sympathy.