



HR0495

LRB103 35211 LAW 65192 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Faith in God is an inalienable right to all of those who believe in the teachings of a higher being; and

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WHEREAS, Our Founding Fathers understood the importance of faith in God when writing the U.S. Constitution, guaranteeing the freedom of religion for all citizens; and

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WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln immortalized the phrase "this nation, under God" in the Gettysburg Address, enshrining our nation during its darkest moment in "a new birth of freedom"; and

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WHEREAS, Prayer has always played an important role in the foundation of the American way of life and has helped form the solid basis of cultural harmony and civility, which is evident in The Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag and on our currency; and

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WHEREAS, Knowing of the cultural and spiritual harmony that faith brings to all who believe, it should be this chamber's responsibility to again provide a room of worship to General Assembly members, guests, and visitors of the Illinois State Capitol Building; and

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1           WHEREAS, In 1985, then-Speaker Michael J. Madigan  
2 introduced HR 408, which designated a room as a prayer room on  
3 the first floor of the State Capitol Building; and

4           WHEREAS, Throughout the ensuing years, the prayer room was  
5 utilized by various General Assembly members, regardless of  
6 their philosophical, political, or religious differences, who  
7 sought a place where worship was welcomed; and

8           WHEREAS, Sadly, the prayer room was removed during a  
9 renovation of the West Wing, and a new prayer room was never  
10 designated nor established; and

11           WHEREAS, Without a dedicated room of worship, our State  
12 Capitol Building is similar to most state capitol buildings;  
13 in fact, in the Midwest, the only state to have a dedicated  
14 room of worship in its capitol building is the State of  
15 Indiana; and

16           WHEREAS, In the U.S. Capitol Building, a room set apart  
17 for prayer and meditation is near the rotunda to be used  
18 primarily by members of Congress who wish to withdraw and seek  
19 divine strength and guidance, both in public affairs and in  
20 their own personal matters; and

21           WHEREAS, The U.S. Capitol Building's prayer room was

1 established during the 83rd Congress of the United States,  
2 pursuant to U.S. House Concurrent Resolution 60 in 1953 and  
3 U.S. Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 in 1954; and

4 WHEREAS, The legality of a prayer room in the State  
5 Capitol Building was previously justified through the 1988  
6 court case decision of Van Zandt v. Thompson in the 7th Circuit  
7 of the U.S. Court of Appeals and within the Illinois State  
8 Constitution, thereby reiterating that no there is no legal  
9 jeopardy and that the establishment clause has not been  
10 violated; and

11 WHEREAS, The Preamble of the Constitution of the State of  
12 Illinois reads, "We, the People of the State of Illinois -  
13 grateful to the Almighty God for the civil, political and  
14 religious liberty which He has permitted us to enjoy and  
15 seeking His blessing upon our endeavors," further setting the  
16 stage for such a room; and

17 WHEREAS, The establishment of such a room, because of its  
18 universality, is within the provisions of Section 3 of Article  
19 X of the Illinois State Constitution, where the use of public  
20 funds for sectarian purposes is forbidden in that no state  
21 funds shall be allocated for "anything in aid of any church or  
22 sectarian purpose"; and

1           WHEREAS, The concept is consistent with the provisions of  
2 subsection (a) of Section 1 of Article VIII of the Illinois  
3 State Constitution, which provides that "Public funds,  
4 property or credit shall be used only for public purposes", as  
5 the facility will be made available to the people of the State  
6 of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly; and

7           WHEREAS, Both the Illinois House and Senate routinely open  
8 all Sessions with prayer by a diverse group of faith leaders  
9 and pastors from across Illinois; therefore, be it

10           RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
11 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
12 we request the reestablishment of a prayer room at the  
13 Illinois State Capitol Building near the rotunda in the  
14 current and ongoing renovations of the North Wing.