



HR0690

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Cook
4 County Clerk Karen Yarbrough, a trailblazing Maywood Democrat
5 who served in public office for more than two decades; and

6 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough was born on August 22, 1950; she
7 was a native of Washington D.C. but established herself as a
8 third generation entrepreneur in Cook County; she earned a
9 degree in business administration from Chicago State
10 University and a master's degree in Inner City Studies at
11 Northeastern Illinois University and completed a senior
12 executive government program at Harvard's Kennedy School of
13 Government; and

14 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough made significant contributions
15 after entering her family's tradition of work in the real
16 estate, appraisal, and insurance industry, especially as a
17 woman in a then male-dominated profession; she was the founder
18 and longtime chief executive officer of Hathaway Insurance and
19 was driven to succeed despite those who looked over her
20 shoulder to see if the man who ran the business was around; she
21 often shared this anecdote to inspire young women to persevere
22 through adversity; and

1 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough was sworn in as a state
2 representative in 2001 and served for a time as assistant
3 majority leader; she earned a reputation as a hardworking
4 leader unafraid to fight for what she believed was right; and

5 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough was elected Cook County Recorder
6 of Deeds in 2012 and Clerk in 2018; she was the first Black
7 person and first woman to serve as Cook County Clerk; when the
8 recorder's office was eliminated, she assumed all duties of
9 that office as county clerk in 2020; and

10 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough believed that Illinois would be a
11 better place if it ended the death penalty, taking up an effort
12 that had made little progress in 30 years; she worked
13 tirelessly to help others find the courage to stand for true
14 justice and made Illinois the 16th state to repeal capital
15 punishment, earning her a Nobel Peace Prize nomination and an
16 audience with Pope Benedict XVI in Vatican City; and

17 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough believed than many of society's
18 problems stem from poverty, and she focused much of her effort
19 on eliminating it; she passed legislation creating the
20 Commission on the Elimination of Poverty in 2008, and as a
21 long-time member of the commission, she led its efforts to
22 expand access to affordable housing, adequate food and
23 nutrition, quality health care, equal access to education,

1 dependable transportation, enriching child care for all,
2 opportunities to earn a living wage, and availability of
3 adequate income supports; and

4 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough recognized that predatory
5 mortgage lending practices had a deleterious effect on
6 communities, especially communities of color, and fought to
7 crack down on state-chartered banks and establish a program to
8 track lending and offer mortgage counseling to potential
9 buyers at risk; and

10 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough helped usher in the first major
11 statewide capital construction program in Illinois in a decade
12 to repair the state's crumbling roads, bridges, and schools
13 and create jobs; and

14 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough led the passage of the Smoke Free
15 Illinois Act, one of her proudest achievements, which
16 eliminated indoor smoking in bars, restaurants, and other
17 public places, protecting countless workers, customers, and
18 medically vulnerable individuals from the effects of
19 secondhand smoke; while at the time some believed the effort
20 could not be done, she fought for what was right and made
21 Illinois a leader in the effort to eliminate indoor smoking;
22 her policy is now law in the majority of the country; and

1 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough was active in Democratic Party
2 politics, working for both the Cook County Democratic Party
3 and the Democratic Party of Illinois; she was a Democratic
4 committeeperson representing west suburban Proviso Township
5 for the Cook County party, where she was also the treasurer;
6 she was a member of the state central committee for the
7 Illinois party; and

8 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough received numerous awards
9 recognizing her efforts to promote social justice, public
10 health, fair housing, anti-violence, volunteerism and women's
11 rights, and she proudly mentored young people who sought to
12 become more involved in their communities; and

13 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough enjoyed spending time with her
14 family and was especially proud of her children and
15 grandchildren; and

16 WHEREAS, Karen Yarbrough was a dedicated public servant
17 who was always encouraging and paved the way for many; she was
18 a wonderful human being and was loved by many; therefore, be it

19 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
20 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
21 we mourn the death of Cook County Clerk Karen Yarbrough, a
22 trailblazing Maywood Democrat who served in public office for

1 more than two decades; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
3 presented to the family of Karen Yarbrough as an expression of
4 our deepest sympathy.