

## 1 HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, On May 5, 1905, the first issue of the Chicago  
3 Defender was published by founder Robert Sengstacke Abbott;  
4 and

5 WHEREAS, Many of the successes and advantages that  
6 African-Americans enjoy today can be attributed to the  
7 leadership and guidance of the Chicago Defender; and

8 WHEREAS, At the peak of the mayhem wrought by lynch mobs  
9 and Jim Crow laws in the racist South, Robert S. Abbott  
10 selected a platform and mission honored by the Defender to  
11 this day; and

12 WHEREAS, His demands were radical and courageous for a  
13 publication designed to have an impact in a section of the  
14 country fostered by racism, which disgraced our nation at  
15 home and abroad; and

16 WHEREAS, His message in the pages of the Defender grew  
17 bolder as he exposed the lynchings, the racist legislation,  
18 the rise of Jim Crow, the denial of ballots, and the abuse of  
19 Blacks in America from the state house to the back woods of  
20 Mississippi; and

21 WHEREAS, The Chicago Defender became the publication that  
22 Black people would turn to when they were in trouble, to  
23 educate themselves, to advance the cause of equality, and to  
24 gain inspiration for the cause of justice; and

25 WHEREAS, All of America knew that Robert Sengstacke  
26 Abbott was serious; Black Americans responded in droves as  
27 tens of thousands awaited their copy of the paper; he hired  
28 and trained scores of young writers in Chicago and throughout  
29 the South; and

30 WHEREAS, The Chicago Defender's greatest contribution to

1 American life was the paper's encouragement of Black  
2 migration from the racist South; that changed Black voting  
3 power in key northern cities to the extent that it had a  
4 permanent impact on national politics; and

5 WHEREAS, The Defender became the chief educator of Blacks  
6 about their history of achievements and their political  
7 strength; distinguished Black educators, along with the  
8 achievements of Black colleges with their superb academic,  
9 athletic, and cultural programs, were departures in the pages  
10 of the paper; Blacks were informed of the accomplishments of  
11 Black entertainers and their unique creations; Black  
12 newspaper columnist and historians gave African-Americans  
13 exposure as scholars, scientists, and philosophers; and

14 WHEREAS, By 1920, 15 years after its birth, the Chicago  
15 Defender reached a national circulation of 200,000,  
16 two-thirds of which was outside of Chicago as 23,000 copies  
17 were sold in New York City alone; and

18 WHEREAS, Through the pages, the Chicago Defender, under  
19 Mr. Abbott, launched a vast campaign he called the Great  
20 Northern Drive; the drive was launched on May 15, 1917, and  
21 as a result, the Black population in Chicago rose from 40,000  
22 to nearly 150,000 in a few short years; and

23 WHEREAS, Mr. Abbott didn't stop there; he provided  
24 guidelines for living in the city, helped find jobs and  
25 housing, and distributed food to the needy; and

26 WHEREAS, In 1929, he developed the Bud Billiken Parade  
27 into what became the nation's largest and most spectacular  
28 event of its kind; its purpose remains as he dreamt it, to  
29 give underprivileged children a chance to be in the limelight  
30 for one day in a celebration of culture and achievement,  
31 which creates lifelong memories and pride; it remains  
32 Chicago's premier event in support and participation of

1 people, from politicians to entertainers to athletes to  
2 everyday citizens; and

3 WHEREAS, When Robert Sengstacke Abbott died on February  
4 29, 1940, the Chicago Defender was Black America's social,  
5 educational, and political voice; with children of his own  
6 and a strong sense of family, he selected his nephew, John  
7 H.H. Sengstacke, as successor of the Chicago Defender; and

8 WHEREAS, After John Sengstacke took control of the  
9 Defender in 1940, he expanded the message of the newspaper by  
10 purchasing the Pittsburgh Courier and founding the Michigan  
11 Chronicle and Tri-State Defender; therefore, be it

12 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
13 NINETY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
14 we commemorate the anniversary of the Chicago Defender, which  
15 has been the voice of Chicago's Black community for 98 years,  
16 and recognize the many contributions it has made and will  
17 continue to make in years to come; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
19 presented to the current publisher of the Chicago Defender,  
20 David Milliner.