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HOUSE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The members of the House of Representatives of the State of Illinois learned with great sorrow of the death of Vernon Jarrett on Sunday, May 23, 2004; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett was a leading African-American journalist whose reports and columns appeared in the Chicago Sun-Times, the Chicago Tribune, and the Chicago Daily Defender; throughout his illustrious career, he often wrote about and spoke out on controversial issues; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett was born in Paris, Tennessee, to a schoolteacher and a school principal, both of whom were the children of former slaves; he graduated from Knoxville (Tennessee) College; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett covered a race riot on his first day as a reporter for the Chicago Defender in 1946, and was delighted to see his byline appear alongside those of the activist W.E.B. DuBois and poet Langston Hughes; from 1948 to 1951, Mr. Jarrett and composer Oscar Brown Jr. produced "Negro Newsfront", the nation's first daily radio broadcast created by African Americans; he also worked for the Associated Negro Press; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett became the Chicago Tribune's first African-American columnist in 1970; he used his editorial voice as a forum for commentary on the social and economic trends affecting African Americans and the global concerns of pan-African politics; in 1983, he took his column to the Chicago Sun-Times, where he served on the editorial board and worked until 1994; he was known to be a distinctive voice, not only for the African-American community, but for all of Chicago; in his position as a columnist for the Sun-Times, he was a mentor to any reporter who sought his counsel; and

1           WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett produced nearly 2,000 broadcasts on  
2 WLS-Channel 7; he was a founder of the National Association of  
3 Black Journalists and served as its president from 1977 to  
4 1979; he was current president of the group's Chicago chapter;  
5 also in 1977, he created the NAACP-sponsored ACT-SO program, or  
6 Academic, Cultural, Technological, and Scientific Olympics;  
7 ACT-SO has awarded more than \$1,000,000 in scholarships,  
8 computers, and books to thousands of students; he also served  
9 as a member of the editorial board of the NAACP's 90-year-old  
10 Crisis Magazine; in addition, he was a senior fellow at the  
11 Great Cities Institute of the University of Illinois at Chicago  
12 and taught history and journalism at other colleges; and

13           WHEREAS, In 1998, Mr. Jarrett was inducted into the  
14 National Literary Hall of Fame at the University of Chicago's  
15 Gwendolyn Brooks Center; the National Academy of Television  
16 Arts and Sciences awarded him its Silver Circle Award,  
17 recognizing his 30 years of contributions to the medium; he was  
18 honored with the first NAACP James Weldon Johnson Achievement  
19 Award; he was an active member of the American Society of  
20 Newspaper Editors (ASNE) and

21           WHEREAS, In recent years, Mr. Jarrett was a columnist for  
22 the New York Times' New American News Syndicate and his social  
23 commentary was heard during "The Jarrett Journal", a news  
24 broadcast on WVON-AM, Chicago's only African-American owned  
25 radio station; and

26           WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett had a passion for writing, was an avid  
27 reader, especially of history, and was a chronicler of black  
28 politics nationwide; and

29           WHEREAS, The passing of Vernon Jarrett has been deeply felt  
30 by many, especially his wife, Fernetta; his son, Thomas; and  
31 his three grandchildren; therefore, be it

1           RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
2           NINETY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we  
3           mourn the passing of Vernon Jarrett, a pioneer for  
4           African-American journalists who demonstrated the highest  
5           ideals of journalism and community responsibility; and be it  
6           further

7           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
8           presented to the family of Vernon Jarrett as an expression of  
9           our sincerest condolences during their time of bereavement.