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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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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

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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; and

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WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett was born in Paris, Tennessee; his father was a principal and his mother was a school teacher, they were children of former slaves; he graduated from Knoxville (Tennessee) College; and

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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

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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

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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; and

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

25           WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett had a passion for writing, was an avid  
26 reader, especially of history, and was a chronicler of black  
27 politics nationwide; he encouraged African-American children,  
28 as well as everyone, to read; he also promoted the reading of  
29 Carter G. Woodson's "The Miseducation of the Negro"; he wanted  
30 to make sure young people would have opportunities in many  
31 different fields; and

32           WHEREAS, The passing of Vernon Jarrett has been deeply felt

1 by many, especially his wife, Fernetta; his son, Thomas; and  
2 his three grandchildren; therefore, be it

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

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