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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Senate of the State of Illinois learned with great sadness of the passing of Mildred T. "Ditter" Behrends of Mason City on December 27, 2003; and

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WHEREAS, When Mildred Behrends was little, her older sister, Alberta, tried to call her "Sister" but it always came out "Ditter"; the name stuck, and by the time Mildred was an adult, the nickname seemed especially fitting for a woman whose fingers seemed to dance effortlessly up and down the piano keyboard in complex boogies and syncopated ragtime tunes; and

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WHEREAS, During the prime of her life, Mildred Behrends was probably more recognizable than the mayor or any other figure around Mason City; known to everyone as "Ditter", Ms. Behrends played the piano or organ for practically every public event in town; she succeeded Vera Fink as pianist for the silent movies at the Liberty Theatre, one of the first forums where her natural ability shone; accompanists for silent movies had a full book to prepare for each show and were given mere days to learn it; "Ditter" played the music well and added her own embellishments to boot; and

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WHEREAS, Since high school, Ms. Behrends has been a member of the Euterpean Society, a local organization named for the goddess of music; among the many accomplished musicians involved in the society, Ms. Behrends often was the accompanist of choice; she could follow regimented scores, transpose to other keys, or improvise; and

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WHEREAS, Wearing lots of bangles, Ms. Behrends dressed colorfully, often in red, white, and blue; born on the fourth of July, she was a true Yankee Doodle Dandy; and

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WHEREAS, Ms. Behrends played for local minstrel shows and

1 every other kind of musical program during her career; ragtime  
2 was her forte, and with her Euterpean friends, she plied their  
3 vaudevillian and variety acts at nursing homes, club meetings,  
4 and other venues; and

5 WHEREAS, Ms. Behrends adventures in show business included  
6 being asked to tour with the Tiny Hill orchestra, the band that  
7 played from Carnegie Hall on the Lucky Strike Cigarettes "Hit  
8 Parade Show" in 1943; and

9 WHEREAS, Back home in Mason City, Ms. Behrends played organ  
10 for her home church, the Christian Church, and also for St.  
11 Columba's Catholic Church; she provided music at countless  
12 weddings and funerals and was a perennial musician providing  
13 hourlong piano-organ duets at the annual Euterpean alumni  
14 banquet; and

15 WHEREAS, The passing of Mildred Behrends has been deeply  
16 felt by all who knew and loved her, especially her son, Ron  
17 Kramme; her stepdaughter, Ruth Dowell; her two grandchildren;  
18 and her great-grandchild; therefore, be it

19 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-THIRD GENERAL  
20 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the death of  
21 Mildred "Ditter" Behrends along with all who knew and loved her  
22 and extend our sincere condolences to her family and friends;  
23 and be it further

24 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
25 presented to the family of Mildred T. Behrends as an expression  
26 of our deepest sympathy.