



1 HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the House of Representatives
3 learned with sadness of the death of jazz great Oscar Brown Jr.
4 on Sunday, May 29, 2005; and

5 WHEREAS, The son of a South Side attorney and real estate
6 broker, Mr. Brown was active in the civil rights movement with
7 a knack for bluntness that was later found in his songs;
8 growing up in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, he was taught
9 the importance of giving back to the community, that sharing
10 your talents is the best way to uplift others; in a career that
11 spanned more than 50 years, he became a jazz giant, revered as
12 a lyricist, songwriter, composer, singer, and performer; and

13 WHEREAS, At age 15, Mr. Brown made his professional debut
14 on the national radio show "Secret City"; he graduated from
15 Englewood High School and attended classes at the University of
16 Michigan and Lincoln University, a small college in
17 Pennsylvania; and

18 WHEREAS, Before there was such a thing, Mr. Brown was a
19 rapper who recited street poems to the pulse of Shakespeare's
20 iambic pentameter; he was known as "The High Priest of Hip" and
21 "The Grandpap of Rap"; and

22 WHEREAS, Mr. Brown saw music and song writing as a way to
23 enrich lives; he released his first album, "Sin and Soul", in
24 1960 and received glorious reviews as an emerging jazz
25 musician; and

26 WHEREAS, In the 1960s, Mr. Brown hosted "Jazz Scene
27 U.S.A.", a television program broadcast from the West Coast
28 that introduced jazz to a nationwide audience; Mr. Brown
29 remembered to reach back to the community; he worked with gang
30 members, sometimes casting them in productions after

1 discovering they could sing; and

2 WHEREAS, Throughout his career, he wrote a dozen musicals,
3 including "Buck White" starring boxing great Muhammad Ali on
4 Broadway, countless poems, and more than 1,000 songs, including
5 "The Snake", "Signifying Monkey", and Miles Davis' "All Blues";
6 and

7 WHEREAS, He spoke very candidly about the situation in
8 America in terms of racism and politics; a documentary about
9 his life and a book of his poetry are scheduled to be released
10 in the fall; he opened "Jazz at Lincoln Center" in New York in
11 October and celebrated the March opening of "Music is My Life,
12 Politics My Mistress", a documentary about his life; and

13 WHEREAS, One principle that Mr. Brown believed in and
14 attempted to foster in young people was the concept that "hip"
15 should stand for "human improvement potential", because he
16 believed that every human has some potential; and

17 WHEREAS, The passing of Oscar Brown Jr. has been deeply
18 felt by many, especially his wife, Jean Pace Brown; his son,
19 Napoleon Brown; his daughters, Donna Brown Kane, Iantha Casen,
20 Maggie Brown, and Africa Pace Brown; his 16 grandchildren; and
21 his four great-grandchildren; therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
23 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
24 we mourn the passing of Oscar Brown Jr., and we extend our
25 deepest sympathy to his family, friends, and all who knew and
26 loved him; and be it further

27 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
28 presented to his family as an expression of our sincere
29 condolences for the loss of a jazz giant who gave so much to
30 his community and to the music world.