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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, William "Bill" C. Harris of Pontiac, a longtime
3 state lawmaker, former President of the Illinois Senate, and
4 former Illinois Commissioner of Banks and Trust Companies, died
5 on December 30, 2004; and

6 WHEREAS, He was born May 7, 1921 in Pontiac, the son of
7 Raleigh J. and Bernadine (Cullen) Harris; he graduated from
8 Pontiac Grade School and Pontiac Township High School; he
9 entered Michigan State University in the fall of 1941, and in
10 December 1941, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy; while at Great
11 Lakes, he was named honor man out of a class of 750 in the naval
12 program; during World War II, he served as aviation chief
13 ordinance man in the South Pacific; he was honorably discharged
14 in December of 1945 after serving four years; after returning
15 to Pontiac, he joined the R.J. Harris Funeral Home as a
16 partner; on May 31, 1947, he married Jeanne Turck in Pontiac at
17 the original Grace Episcopal Church on the square; and

18 WHEREAS, In May 1948, he became the charter president of
19 Pontiac Jaycees; he was also a charter member of the Saint
20 James Hospital advisory board, a member of the Moose, Pontiac
21 Elks Lodge, Lions Club, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American
22 Legion, and the Voiture 8 et 8 in Pontiac; and

23 WHEREAS, William Harris was a public official who was
24 committed to serving the people of Illinois; first elected to
25 the Illinois House of Representatives in 1954 at the age of 33,
26 he was the House Whip during his six years of service in that
27 body; in 1960, he was elected to the Senate, and during his 16
28 years of service, he held the position of assistant majority
29 leader and was elected the first president of the Senate, a
30 position created under the 1970 Illinois Constitution; Senator
31 Harris was elected "Most Effective Senator" three successive
32 years; in 1977, he was appointed by then Gov. Jim Thompson as

1 Illinois Commissioner of Banks and Trust Companies; he held
2 that position until he retired in January 1991; and

3 WHEREAS, William Harris was a delegate to the Republican
4 National Convention in Miami in 1968; he served as trustee of
5 the Humiston Haven Nursing Home, trustee of the Appolos Camp,
6 Bennet Humiston Trust since 1975, and trustee on the Floyd and
7 Alta Byrne Trust; he served as a senior vice president of Cole
8 Taylor Bank, as a board member of the Community Bank of
9 Pittsfield, and as ambassador at-large to the Community Bankers
10 of Illinois; he was chairman of the World Trade Association of
11 Illinois for two years, a board member of the Cradle in
12 Evanston for many years, and then was an Emeritus Member of the
13 Cradle Board; he was a member of Grace Episcopal Church in
14 Pontiac; and

15 WHEREAS, A staunch Republican, he was well-respected
16 regardless of one's political persuasion and was a man who saw
17 his strength as getting people to see others' viewpoints and in
18 being able to make accommodations to solve problems in this
19 unique and diverse State; he will be remembered as a legislator
20 who was truly committed to making Illinois a better place to
21 live for all its citizens, and he was known to "reach across
22 the political aisle" and was a great people person who
23 positively impacted the lives of many people whose lives he
24 touched; and

25 WHEREAS, On the statewide scene, the City of Pontiac was
26 synonymous with Bill Harris; he was a part of the history and
27 depth of Pontiac and of Illinois history, serving when the
28 State government was undergoing major reforms from biennial
29 budgets to annual budgets, from six-month legislative sessions
30 every two years to annual sessions; he worked at making the
31 legislative branch an equal branch of government, engaging in
32 the efforts to implement many provisions of the 1970 Illinois
33 Constitution; and

1 WHEREAS, Many remember Bill Harris as always having a smile
2 and an upbeat, can-do attitude; and

3 WHEREAS, He was preceded in death by his mother, Bernadine
4 Harris, his father, Raleigh J. Harris, his sister, Helen
5 Elizabeth Harris, and his brother, Raleigh J. Harris Jr.; and

6 WHEREAS, The passing of William C. Harris will be felt by
7 all who knew and loved him, especially his wife Jeanne; his two
8 children, Barbara A. Harris and Charles M. (Robin) Harris; and
9 his two grandchildren, Lindsey J. Schrof and Jenna Harris;
10 therefore, be it

11 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL
12 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
13 CONCURRING HEREIN, that we mourn the passing of William C.
14 Harris and we extend to his family our thoughts and prayers
15 during this difficult time; and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
17 presented to his family as an expression of our deepest
18 sympathy.