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SENATE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Senator Kimberly A. Lightford and the members of
3 the Senate of the State of Illinois learned with sadness of the
4 death of Leola Spann of Chicago on March 27, 2005 at the age of
5 71; and

6 WHEREAS, Born in Natchez, Mississippi, she worked at a
7 foundry and on an assembly line while raising three daughters;
8 she retired to the Austin neighborhood in 1983; when she
9 noticed that basic services were being ignored, she started as
10 a volunteer answering phones at the Northwest Austin Council,
11 where she quickly worked her way up to become Executive
12 Director, then President of the Board of Directors, a position
13 she held until her death; and

14 WHEREAS, She led the first lawsuit in the State to use
15 nuisance abatement law to shut down a notorious drug haven; the
16 Northwest Austin Council used the nuisance abatement law to
17 shut down 40 drug houses; she helped obtain federal funds to
18 improve the neighborhood in the form of the Austin Weed and
19 Seed Program; the Northwest Austin Council piloted the first
20 community policing effort in the Chicago area; and

21 WHEREAS, She guided community efforts to organize and train
22 parents regarding school reform; the Northwest Austin Council
23 worked with other community organizations for full school
24 funding; she spearheaded an effort to revitalize Austin High
25 School and instill a sense of pride and accomplishment in
26 students, staff, parents, and the community; and

27 WHEREAS, Out of concern over the disparity of health care
28 in the African-American community, she was instrumental in
29 saving the St. Anne's Hospital facility for the community and
30 in the creation of the Westside Health Authority, which works
31 to improve the health of the community's residents and preserve

1 health services; and

2 WHEREAS, As the President of the Friends of the North
3 Austin Library, she was responsible for getting a major
4 expansion project completed at the library; and

5 WHEREAS, She used a model of environmental justice to start
6 the Austin Green Team, which was responsible for turning
7 abandoned lots into gardens that beautify the community; and

8 WHEREAS, In her retirement, she spearheaded the Tenants
9 Association at the Beth-Anne Senior Building to organize
10 tenants; and

11 WHEREAS, The passing of Leola Spann is deeply felt by all
12 who knew and loved her, especially her daughters, Anita Brown,
13 Barbara Hill, and Laura Vann; her brother, John Dorsey; her
14 sister, Mary Peery; and her six grandchildren and five
15 great-grandchildren; and

16 WHEREAS, Senator Kimberly A. Lightford will forever
17 embrace the loving kindness with which Leola Spann greeted her
18 from the first day they met; Leola will always be remembered as
19 the grandmother of the Austin Community and for her tireless
20 efforts to improve the lives of others; therefore, be it

21 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL
22 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that even as her death is
23 mourned, we give thanks for the blessing of Leola Spann's life
24 and extend our sincerest condolences to her family, friends,
25 and community, whose grief we share; and be it further

26 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
27 presented to her family as an expression of our deepest
28 sympathy.