



1

SENATE RESOLUTION

2

WHEREAS, The members of the Senate of the State of Illinois learned with sadness of the death of jazz great Oscar Brown Jr. on Sunday, May 29, 2005; and

3

4

5

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

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

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

14

15

16

17

18

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

19

20

21

22

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

23

24

25

26

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

27

28

29

30

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