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SENATE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The members of the Senate of the State of Illinois learned with regret of the death of one of our nation's foremost civil rights leaders, Coretta Scott King, on Tuesday, January 31, 2006; and

WHEREAS, She was born on April 27, 1927, on her grandfather's farm in Heiberger, Alabama, to Obadiah and Bernice Scott; she attended Lincoln High School in Marion, Alabama, and Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, where she was the first African American to major in elementary education; and

WHEREAS, While attending Antioch College, Mrs. King was active in the NAACP and shifted the focus of her studies to music; in 1951, she won a scholarship to the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston; it was there that she was first introduced to her future husband, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.; and

WHEREAS, In 1952, a friend wanted to introduce her to Dr. King, who at the time was studying for his doctoral degree at Boston University; when Mrs. King found out that he was a minister, she lost interest, fearing he was too pious and narrow-minded; still, Dr. King called her and convinced her to have lunch with him; that very day, he told her that he thought they should get married someday, that she was everything that he had wanted in a woman; they were eventually married in the garden of her parents' home in Alabama on June 19, 1953; and

WHEREAS, After earning her degree in voice and violin and after Dr. King passed his exams, he took on the pastorship of Dexter Avenue Church in Montgomery, Alabama; on December 1, 1955, a seamstress named Rosa Parks boarded a crowded Montgomery bus and refused to give up her seat to a white

1 passenger; she was arrested for violating the state's bus
2 segregation law, igniting a fury among Montgomery's blacks that
3 would ripple across the South; local black leaders formed the
4 ad hoc Montgomery Improvement Assn. and called for a boycott of
5 the municipal bus system; the man chosen to lead the protest
6 was the young minister from Dexter Avenue Church; and

7 WHEREAS, Dr. King became the most famous black man in
8 America when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on November 13, 1956,
9 that Montgomery's bus segregation laws were unconstitutional;
10 he became known for his oration, and his most famous speech,
11 the "I Have a Dream" address delivered at the 1963 March on
12 Washington, was a clarion call for justice that galvanized the
13 nation; the following year he was the recipient of the 1964
14 Nobel Peace Prize; and

15 WHEREAS, During the 1950s and 1960s, the Kings had to worry
16 about their own safety, when their house was bombed while Mrs.
17 King was there with the baby, Yolanda, when Dr. King was
18 stabbed in the heart by a deranged woman, and when he was
19 incarcerated multiple times for taking a stand for freedom and
20 equality; and

21 WHEREAS, While much of her time was spent at home with
22 Yolanda and their other three children, Martin III, Dexter, and
23 Bernice, Mrs. King was active in several organizations; she had
24 been a member since her college days of the anti-war group,
25 Women's Strike for Peace; at Dr. King's urging, she joined a
26 delegation of the group that went to Geneva, Switzerland, in
27 1962 for atomic test-ban talks; she also was a member of the
28 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and in
29 1969, she led a quarter of a million people on the first
30 "moratorium" on the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C.; and

31 WHEREAS, She also raised money for the civil rights
32 movement by organizing a series of "Freedom Concerts", the

1 first of which took place in New York City in 1964; they were
2 modeled on a program held on December 5, 1956, the first
3 anniversary of the Montgomery boycott, in which she, Duke
4 Ellington, Harry Belafonte, and other performers told the story
5 of the Montgomery struggle through music, poetry, and prose;
6 she eventually gave more than 30 concerts and raised in excess
7 of \$50,000 for the cause; and

8 WHEREAS, As history has recorded, the Reverend Dr. Martin
9 Luther King Jr. was shot and killed on April 4, 1968, in
10 Memphis, Tennessee; he and Mrs. King had been married 14 years;
11 President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a national day of
12 mourning; and

13 WHEREAS, Before his burial, Mrs. King flew to Memphis to
14 take his place at the head of the protest march by garbage
15 workers whose plight had brought him to the city; a month
16 later, she helped to open the Poor Peoples' Campaign that he
17 had been planning before his death; she then became the
18 custodian of her late husband's legacy; in 1969, she began to
19 mobilize support for the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for
20 Nonviolent Change; she eventually raised \$15 million to build
21 the complex, which opened in 1982; she served as the center's
22 president for two decades; and

23 WHEREAS, She also channeled her energy into a long and
24 difficult drive to establish a King holiday; the legislation
25 finally cleared Congress on November 19, 1983, and was signed
26 by President Ronald Reagan two weeks later; Dr. King's birthday
27 became the tenth national holiday and only the second named for
28 an American; and

29 WHEREAS, She established herself as an advocate of women's
30 rights and full employment in the 1970s, campaigned against
31 apartheid in the 1980s, and was a keynote speaker in 1984 at
32 the U.N. International Day of Solidarity with the Women of

1 South Africa and Namibia; the next year she was arrested with
2 her daughter, Bernice, at a rally outside the South African
3 Embassy in Washington; in 1994, she shared the podium with
4 Nelson Mandela after he won the first nonracial government
5 election in South Africa; and

6 WHEREAS, The passing of Coretta Scott King has been deeply
7 felt by many, especially her children, Dexter, Martin Luther
8 III, Yolanda Denise, and Bernice Albertine; therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL
10 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
11 Coretta Scott King, who leaves a legacy of activism and
12 devotion to the ideal, and we extend our sincere condolences to
13 her family, friends, and all who knew and loved her; and be it
14 further

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