



HR1489

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Ronald
4 Burton Watkins, noted author, entrepreneur, and economic
5 development consultant; and

6 WHEREAS, Ron Watkins began his entrepreneurial career in
7 1965, when he opened Mr. Lucky's Jazz Club on the south side of
8 Chicago, featuring some of Chicago's best jazz artists; in
9 1968, he founded Expressions In Black, an entertainment and
10 speaker's bureau presenting African American artists and
11 lecturers on college campuses throughout the United States; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1975, Ron Watkins founded and served as
13 Chairman of The Chicago Association of Audio Visual Producers;
14 In 1977, he joined the staff of the Illinois Department of
15 Economic Development as the first African American to be
16 employed by the state as an Industrial Development Consultant;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, In 1979, Ron Watkins was appointed by the governor
19 as the Director of Minority Business Enterprise for the State
20 of Illinois; during his tenure, he initiated the state's first
21 Minority Export Assistance Program and organized trade
22 missions to Haiti, Jamaica, and the Bahamas; he served in this

1 position until 1984, when he resigned to pursue his interests
2 in international trade; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1989, Ron Watkins moved to Liberia in western
4 Africa and established The Sub-Saharan Gold and Diamond Fund,
5 an offshore trading company involved in gold brokerage and
6 import of machinery and equipment used by gold and diamond
7 miners in Liberia; and

8 WHEREAS, In 1992, Ron Watkins founded The Heritage
9 International Trade Association, a not for profit membership
10 organization providing technical assistance and consultant
11 services to small businesses interested in global trade; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1994, Ron Watkins completed and published his
13 first book, "Doing Business In Africa, Myths and Realities";
14 from 1995 to 2001, he wrote a monthly column, "Thinking
15 Globally", for Afrique Newsmagazine in Chicago; and

16 WHEREAS, In 2000, Ron Watkins founded The African Trade
17 Center Association with a \$200,000 research grant from the
18 State of Illinois to conduct a feasibility study on
19 establishing an African Trade Center in Chicago; and

20 WHEREAS, In 2006, Ron Watkins completed the manuscript for
21 his second book, "Cooperative Economics, A Global Vision for

1 Black Economic Development"; in the same year, he founded and
2 served as the president of the Liberian-American Center for
3 Trade & Development; and

4 WHEREAS, Ron Watkins was featured in Crain's Chicago
5 Business, The Chicago Tribune, The Network Journal Magazine,
6 The Weekly Standard, The Chicago Defender, and The Wall Street
7 Journal and appeared on several local radio and television talk
8 shows; he also taught International Business in the Chicago
9 City College system and organized several trade missions and
10 seminars on trade and investment with Africa and the Caribbean;
11 and

12 WHEREAS, Ron was preceded in death by his father, George
13 (Cookie) Watkins, and his mother, Louise Watkins; and

14 WHEREAS, Ron Watkins is survived by his children, Ronald
15 (Suzan) Harris, Pamela Williams, Burton (Anita) Amos, and
16 Sheila Watkins; his sisters, Rodena Jackson and Shazzada
17 Wilkens; his brother, Kenyatta Watkins; his nephews, Alvin
18 Jackson, Jr. and Antonio Jones, Jr.; his fifteen grandchildren
19 and fifteen great-grandchildren; and a host of friends that he
20 considered family; therefore, be it

21 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
22 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we

1 mourn, along with his family and friends, the passing of Ronald
2 Burton Watkins; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
4 presented to the family of Ron Watkins as an expression of our
5 sympathy.