



HR0071

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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 James
4 Webb Wagner, activist, civic leader, and long-time Hyde Park
5 resident, who died on January 10, 2009; and

6 WHEREAS, Jim graduated from DuSable High School, received
7 his B.S. from Northwestern University, his M.A. from the
8 University of Chicago, and his Ph.D. from Western Colorado
9 University; and

10 WHEREAS, Jim began his career as a teacher with the Chicago
11 Public Schools; he then became the Education Director at the
12 Chicago Urban League, and then the Dean of Students in the
13 School of Public Health at the University of Illinois at
14 Chicago where he served for nearly 20 years; and

15 WHEREAS, Jim was a community activist and consummate
16 organizer; he headed the DuSable Alumni Coalition, which
17 successfully fought to keep DuSable High School open when the
18 Chicago Public Schools had plans to close it, and the Mary
19 Herriek Scholarship Fund, which raised over \$200,000 for
20 scholarships for more than 200 DuSable graduates; even after
21 his retirement, he worked as a consultant to non-profit
22 organizations and continued his deep commitment to community

1 and civic interests; he led efforts for 10 years to bring
2 Neighbors' Eve to Hyde Park, enabling families to celebrate,
3 without cost, New Years Eve with music, food and games in local
4 venues; and

5 WHEREAS, Jim was a longtime civil rights activist; he was
6 one of 9 members of the Emergency Relief Committee for Fayette
7 County, Tennessee, which in 1961 and 1962 raised thousands of
8 dollars and sent tons of food to sharecroppers in Tennessee who
9 had been thrown off the land for registering to vote; he was
10 captain of the "Green Train" which in 1963 transported hundreds
11 of Chicagoans to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's March on
12 Washington; he led the Attending to Black Culture committee,
13 which met at the University Church in Hyde Park and focused on
14 African-American customs and celebrated Martin Luther King Jr.
15 years before the holiday came to be; one of Mr. Wagner's
16 greatest joys was the election of Barack Obama as President;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, Jim's love for Jazz, originally stoked by Captain
19 Walter Dyett at DuSable High School, led him to found the Hyde
20 Park Jazz Society in an effort to revive jazz in Hyde Park;
21 with the help of the University of Chicago, the society brought
22 the Checkerboard Lounge to Hyde Park and established the highly
23 successful Sunday night jazz series; he helped create the Hyde
24 Park Jazz Festival, which drew over 15,000 listeners in its

1 second year; last year, the Jazz Society dedicated and
2 permanently named the Midway Plaisance stage the James W.
3 Wagner Center Stage; and

4 WHEREAS, Jim lived for his community, his music, and the
5 civil rights of all people, but his first love was for his
6 family: Almarie, his wife of 36 years and his daughters, Cecily
7 and Cynthia; therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
9 NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
10 mourn, along with his family and friends, the passing of James
11 Webb Wagner; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
13 presented to the family of Jim Wagner as a symbol of our
14 sincere sympathy.