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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 Dr. John  
4 Hope Franklin of Duke University; Dr. Franklin was a scholar of  
5 African-American History; he passed away on March 25, 2009; and

6           WHEREAS, He was a prolific scholar of African-American  
7 history who profoundly influenced thinking about slavery and  
8 Reconstruction while helping to further the civil rights  
9 struggle; during a career of scholarship, teaching, and  
10 advocacy that spanned more than 70 years, Dr. Franklin was  
11 deeply involved in the painful debates that helped reshape  
12 America's racial identity, working with the Reverend Dr. Martin  
13 Luther King Jr., W. E. B. Du Bois, Thurgood Marshall, and other  
14 major civil rights figures of the 20th century; and

15           WHEREAS, Dr. Franklin combined idealism with rigorous  
16 research, producing such classic works as "From Slavery to  
17 Freedom: A History of African-Americans," first published in  
18 1947; the work was considered one of the definitive historical  
19 surveys of the American black experience, has sold more than  
20 three million copies, and has been translated into Japanese,  
21 German, French, Chinese, and other languages; Dr. Franklin also  
22 taught at some of the nation's leading institutions, including  
23 Harvard and the University of Chicago, in addition to Duke, and

1 as a scholar he personally broke several racial barriers; and

2 WHEREAS, He often argued that historians have an important  
3 role in shaping policy, a position he put into practice when he  
4 worked with Thurgood Marshall's team of lawyers in their effort  
5 to strike down segregation in the landmark 1954 case *Brown v.*  
6 *Board of Education*, which outlawed the doctrine of "separate  
7 but equal" in the nation's public schools; Dr. Franklin also  
8 participated in the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery,  
9 Alabama, with Dr. King; and

10 WHEREAS, Dr. Franklin's prestige led President Clinton to  
11 select him in 1997 to head the Advisory Board to the  
12 President's Initiative on Race, which was formed to promote  
13 dialogue about the country's race problems; he was the first  
14 African-American president of the American Historical  
15 Association; the first black department chairman at a  
16 predominantly white institution, Brooklyn College; the first  
17 black professor to hold an endowed chair at Duke; the first  
18 black chairman of the University of Chicago's history  
19 department; and the first African-American to present a paper  
20 at the segregated Southern Historical Association, one of many  
21 groups that later elected him its president; and

22 WHEREAS, John Hope Franklin was born on January 2, 1915, in  
23 Rentiesville, Oklahoma, the son of Buck Colbert Franklin, a

1 lawyer, and Molly Parker Franklin, an elementary school  
2 teacher; his parents had moved to Rentiesville, an all-black  
3 town, after his father was not allowed to practice law in  
4 Louisiana; in the 1920s, the family moved to Tulsa, and at age  
5 11 he was taken to hear the great civil rights leader W. E. B.  
6 Du Bois, with whom Dr. Franklin later became friends; and

7 WHEREAS, His youth was marked by frequent brushes with  
8 racism; he was forced off an all-white train and made to sit in  
9 a segregated section of the Tulsa opera house; he watched black  
10 neighborhoods of Tulsa, including the one where his father had  
11 his office, being burned during the infamous 1921 race riot,  
12 and he was barred from admission to the University of Oklahoma;  
13 Dr. Franklin attended historically black Fisk University in  
14 Nashville, receiving his B.A. in 1935; there he met Aurelia E.  
15 Whittington, who would become his wife, and sometime editor, of  
16 almost 60 years; they had one son, John Whittington Franklin,  
17 who survives him; and

18 WHEREAS, Before graduating from Fisk, Dr. Franklin  
19 considered following his father into law but was persuaded by a  
20 white professor, Ted Currier, to make history his field;  
21 Professor Currier was said to have borrowed \$500 to help Dr.  
22 Franklin pursue graduate studies at Harvard; there, Dr.  
23 Franklin later recalled, he felt the isolation of being one of  
24 only a handful of blacks on campus; he received his master's

1 degree in 1936 and his Ph.D. in 1941; two years later he  
2 published his first book, "The Free Negro in North Carolina,  
3 1790-1860," which explored slaveholders' hatred and fear of the  
4 quarter-million free blacks in the antebellum South; almost 20  
5 other books followed, either written or edited by Dr. Franklin;  
6 and

7 WHEREAS, John Hope Franklin was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha  
8 Fraternity, Inc., the first intercollegiate Greek-letter  
9 Fraternity established for African Americans; he was initiated  
10 in the Alpha Chi Chapter at Fisk university in 1932, and was an  
11 active member for the next 77 years; he was an early  
12 beneficiary of the Fraternity's Foundation Publishers, which  
13 provides financial support and fellowship for writers  
14 addressing African-American issues; and

15 WHEREAS, Despite his acute awareness of the South's  
16 troubled racial history, Dr. Franklin was often angrier about  
17 Northern racism and frequently defended his adopted home state,  
18 North Carolina; his major biographical project was a 1985 study  
19 of George Washington Williams, a self-educated black Civil War  
20 veteran and author of a 1,000-page 1882 history of blacks in  
21 America from 1619 to 1880; he said he spent nearly 40 years of  
22 intermittent research on the project, calling Williams "one of  
23 the small heroes of the world;"; and

1           WHEREAS, Dr. Franklin's first passion was teaching, and he  
2 continued to log classroom time despite his increasing  
3 prominence; his teaching career began at Fisk in 1936 and  
4 continued over the next 20 years at St. Augustine's College in  
5 Raleigh, North Carolina, North Carolina College in Durham, and  
6 Howard University in Washington; as his first books drew  
7 national notice, Dr. Franklin left the world of historically  
8 black colleges and went to Brooklyn College, where from 1956 to  
9 1964 he served as chairman of what had been an all-white  
10 department; Dr. Franklin later taught at the University of  
11 Chicago before returning to North Carolina in 1982 to teach at  
12 Duke and at the Duke Law School; and

13           WHEREAS, Dr. Franklin was also a Fulbright professor in  
14 Australia and had teaching stints in China and Zimbabwe; he  
15 taught at Cambridge University in England, Harvard, Cornell,  
16 the University of Wisconsin, the University of Hawaii, the  
17 University of California, Berkeley, and other institutions;  
18 since 1992, he had been James B. Duke professor emeritus of  
19 history at Duke; and

20           WHEREAS, A John Hope Franklin Research Center was  
21 established in his honor at Duke; at his home in Durham, Dr.  
22 Franklin continued a lifelong hobby of cultivating hundreds of  
23 orchids; one species was named for him, the Phalaenopsis John  
24 Hope Franklin; his honors, awards, and professional and civic

1 affiliations were so numerous as to fill several single-spaced  
2 pages of a long curriculum vitae; he received more than 100  
3 honorary degrees; and in 2006, he received the John W. Kluge  
4 Prize for the Study of Humanities in a ceremony at the Library  
5 of Congress; therefore, be it

6       RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
7 NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we  
8 mourn, along with his family, friends, students, and fellow  
9 scholars, the passing of Dr. John Hope Franklin; and be it  
10 further

11       RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
12 presented to the family of Dr. John Hope Franklin as a symbol  
13 of our sincere sympathy.