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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, His Excellency Lech Walesa, Former President of the Republic of Poland, helped lead his country to a new era of freedom; and

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WHEREAS, Lech Walesa, the son of a carpenter, rose to become the first democratically-elected President of postwar Poland and helped to usher the country into the modern era by laying the foundation for Poland's eventual admission into NATO, and, as a free nation, into the United Nations; and

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WHEREAS, Lech Walesa, Pope John Paul II, President Ronald Reagan, and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher are recognized as the Big Four, whose courage helped bring about the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc and the end of the Cold War; and

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WHEREAS, Lech Walesa's journey, from working in the massive Lenin shipyard at Gdansk, Poland to becoming the first democratically-elected President in Poland's postwar history, was an arduous one; and

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WHEREAS, Lech Walesa was born on September 29, 1943 in Popowo, Poland; after graduating from vocational school, he worked as a car mechanic at a machine center from 1961 to 1965;

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1 he served in the army for 2 years, where he rose to the rank of  
2 corporal; in 1967, he was employed in the Gdansk shipyards as  
3 an electrician; in 1969, he married Danuta Golos; together,  
4 they have 8 children; and

5 WHEREAS, Working as an electrician in the shipyards in the  
6 early 1970s, Lech Walesa witnessed violent government  
7 crackdowns ordered by Poland's Communist Party leadership  
8 against its own citizens, which spurred him to take action and  
9 become recognized as a labor leader and activist; and

10 WHEREAS, In 1976, as a result of his activities as a shop  
11 steward, Lech Walesa was fired and was forced to earn his  
12 living by taking temporary jobs; and

13 WHEREAS, The Catholic Church supported the Polish workers  
14 movement; in January of 1981, Lech Walesa was cordially  
15 received by Pope John Paul II in the Vatican; and

16 WHEREAS, Lech Walesa regards his faith as a source of  
17 strength and inspiration; and

18 WHEREAS, In recognition of his leadership, Lech Walesa was  
19 elected to serve as the first Solidarity Chairman at the First  
20 National Solidarity Congress in Gdansk in September of 1981;  
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1           WHEREAS, Lech Walesa is recognized for his raw courage as  
2 "the man who stood up"; he continued to lead after he was  
3 imprisoned during the imposition of martial law in communist  
4 Poland; and

5           WHEREAS, In the fall of 1983, Lech Walesa was awarded the  
6 Nobel Peace Prize for his struggle to win workers' rights in  
7 Poland; and

8           WHEREAS, When awarded the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize, the Nobel  
9 Committee stated: "...Walesa is an exponent of the active  
10 longing for peace and freedom which exists, in spite of unequal  
11 conditions, unconquered in all the peoples of the world.  
12 Furthermore the Committee believes that Walesa's attempt to  
13 find a peaceful solution to his country's problems will  
14 contribute to a relaxation of international tension."; and

15           WHEREAS, Lech Walesa's activities have been characterized  
16 by a determination to solve his country's problems through  
17 negotiation and cooperation, without resorting to violence;  
18 and

19           WHEREAS, Lech Walesa served as President of the Republic of  
20 Poland from 1990 to 1995; and

1           WHEREAS, During his presidency, Lech Walesa saw Poland  
2 through privatization and the transition to a free market  
3 economy, the nation's first completely free parliamentary  
4 elections in 1991, and a period of redefinition of Poland's  
5 foreign relations; and

6           WHEREAS, Lech Walesa successfully negotiated the  
7 withdrawal of Soviet troops from Polish soil and won a  
8 substantial reduction in Poland's foreign debts; and

9           WHEREAS, President Lech Walesa was an instrumental force in  
10 ushering in Polish democracy, continued reforms, and national  
11 reconciliation; and

12           WHEREAS, President Lech Walesa leaves a historic legacy of  
13 freedom that has changed the face of Poland, Europe and the  
14 world at large; and

15           WHEREAS, Lech Walesa was named by Time Magazine as one of  
16 the 100 most influential people of the past century; and

17           WHEREAS, Lech Walesa continues to help people that fight  
18 for freedom around the world to believe that they are not alone  
19 in their struggle and that the world is not indifferent to  
20 their aspirations for freedom; and

1           WHEREAS, Lech Walesa has been granted many honorary degrees  
2 from prestigious universities, including Harvard University  
3 and the University of Paris; he has also been the recipient of  
4 the Medal of Freedom (Philadelphia, U.S.A.), the Award of Free  
5 World (Norway), and the European Award of Human Rights; and

6           WHEREAS, Lech Walesa is the founder of the "Lech Walesa  
7 Institute" Foundation in Gdansk, Poland; through this  
8 organization, he wishes to honor those people and institutions  
9 who are active for the cause of freedom and who promote the  
10 values which were at the basis of Polish "Solidarity"; and

11           WHEREAS, President Lech Walesa is the recipient of the 2012  
12 Lincoln Leadership Prize, awarded by the Abraham Lincoln  
13 Presidential Library Foundation on February 9, 2012; the  
14 Foundation celebrates Lincoln's legacy of leadership by  
15 honoring leaders of meritorious quality; the prize is awarded  
16 to exceptional men and women for a lifetime of service in the  
17 Lincoln tradition, marked by great strength of character,  
18 individual conscience, and an unwavering commitment to the  
19 defining principles of democracy; the prize recognizes those  
20 individuals who accept the responsibilities imposed by history  
21 and demanded by conscience; therefore, be it

22           RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
23 NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE

1 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we designate the date of  
2 February 9, 2012 as "Lech Walesa Day" in the State of Illinois  
3 in honor of former Polish President Lech Walesa and his work in  
4 promoting freedom and self-determination in Poland and  
5 throughout the world; and be it further

6 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
7 presented to Lech Walesa as a symbol of our esteem and respect.