



HR0955

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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 Theodis
4 R. Leonard, Sr., who passed away on April 8, 2012; and

5 WHEREAS, He was born February 3, 1934, in Schlater,
6 Mississippi, to Joseph Richard and Lelia Leonard; he graduated
7 from Mileston High School in Tchula, Mississippi in 1953 and
8 enlisted in the United States Air Force, where he served 4
9 years, obtaining the rank of Staff Sergeant, and receiving a
10 special commendation for inventing a hand tool to service
11 airplanes; he was honorably discharged in 1957; and

12 WHEREAS, After leaving the Air Force, he married his high
13 school sweetheart, Essie Tate, and moved to Chicago's North
14 Lawndale community; he enrolled at Crane Junior College, where
15 he received his AB degree in education; he later received his
16 Master's degree in guidance and counseling from Chicago's
17 Teachers College (now Chicago State University); he completed
18 additional coursework to obtain his Type 75 certification (to
19 qualify for school principal) at Governor's State University;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, He began teaching at Gregory School in 1965, and
22 was promoted to guidance teacher and later to Assistant

1 Principal; early on in his career, he served as a program
2 director for a summer youth outreach program based in the Urban
3 Progress Center; he was a mentor to young teachers and was
4 instrumental in bringing programs such as Project CANAL and
5 Adopt A School to help teachers develop professionally and to
6 supplement the school's public resources; he served as
7 Principal of Paderewski School until his retirement in 2001;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, He encouraged several parents to get involved with
10 the PTA and Local School Council, and to go back to school to
11 become teachers; he served as a representative to the Chicago
12 Teachers Union; he was instrumental in getting a representative
13 from the West Side appointed to the Chicago Board of Education
14 and helped organize students, parents, and faculty to keep
15 Gregory School from closing in the late 1980s; and

16 WHEREAS, He networked with a broad cross section of
17 community based organizations, including the Midwest Community
18 Council and Better Boys Foundation; he was an active member of
19 the PTA for Daniel J. Corkery School; he was a founding member
20 of the North Lawndale Learning Community, a network of
21 principals, educators, and North Lawndale residents; and

22 WHEREAS, He was a member of the Carey Tercentenary AME
23 Church for over 50 years; he served in a number of capacities,

1 including Sunday School Superintendent, a member of the Usher
2 Board, Class Leader, member of the Steward Board, and member of
3 the Board of Trustees; he was the co-chairman of a scholarship
4 drive in which the church sold subscriptions, enabling several
5 members of the church to get scholarships to offset college
6 expenses; and

7 WHEREAS, He was appointed President of the Layman's
8 Organization, a position to which he was elected and re-elected
9 for over 30 years; under his leadership, the organization
10 organized a tutoring program to help students with their
11 reading and math skills while enabling student teachers to get
12 hands on experience; the organization was one of the first
13 church auxiliaries in the City of Chicago to develop a computer
14 training program, using TRS-80s and the Commodore 64 computers
15 in the 1980s; the organization started the Carey Cardinals
16 baseball team, which was the West Side's only official Little
17 League affiliate at the time; and

18 WHEREAS, The Laymen's organization also sponsored sewing
19 classes where students learned to sew and showed off their
20 creations with an annual fashion show; the organization
21 developed a Black History Bowl, in which youth and adults
22 competed on teams to answer trivia questions concerning Black
23 History; he was active at the City, 4th District (regional),
24 and Connectional (national and international) levels of the

1 Laymen's organization, focusing on educational issues and
2 raising funds for scholarships; the last project he spearheaded
3 was raising funds for a lift for the church to make services
4 accessible to the elderly and disabled church members and
5 visitors; and

6 WHEREAS, He was very engaged in the civic affairs of North
7 Lawndale, serving as an informal advisor to a number of elected
8 officials, including Congressman Danny K. Davis, former State
9 Representative Arthur L. Turner, and Cook County Commissioner
10 Robert Steele; he networked with other community activists from
11 North Lawndale and the AME Church on voter education and
12 registration drives, candidate forums, and election campaigns
13 for the late Mayor Harold Washington; he also worked with the
14 Carey Tercentenary AME Church Laymen's organization to
15 coordinate North Lawndale's first political rally for State
16 Senator Barack Obama in his quest for United States Senate; and

17 WHEREAS, He was a lifetime member of the NAACP, Retired
18 Teachers Association, and the Principals and Administrators
19 Association; and

20 WHEREAS, Theodis R. Leonard, Sr. leaves to cherish his
21 memory, his wife, Essie; his children, Renee (Floyd) Turner,
22 Valerie F. Leonard, Theodis R. Leonard, Jr., and Curtis Allan
23 Leonard; his special family friend, Kyshia Thompson; his

1 brother, William Humphrey (Juanita) Leonard; his
2 brother-in-law, Thomas Stepp; his Godson, Dr. Raymond H.
3 O'Neal, Jr.; his aunt, LB Holmes; his 10 grandchildren; his 8
4 great-grandchildren; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins,
5 and friends; therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
7 NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
8 we mourn, along with his family and friends, the passing of
9 Theodis R. Leonard, Sr.; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
11 presented to the family of Theodis R. Leonard, Sr. as a symbol
12 of our sincere sympathy.