



HR0149

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives wish to honor Dr. Robert Willis for his work as
4 the Interim Superintendent of Rockford Public Schools and
5 congratulate him on his retirement; and

6 WHEREAS, Following his parents' dream of having their
7 children become the first in their families to attend college,
8 Robert Willis earned his bachelor's degree in physical
9 education from Springfield College in 1963; he subsequently
10 pursued his master's degree in school administration from Seton
11 Hall University and another master's degree in physical
12 education from the University of Minnesota; he later earned his
13 doctorate degree in educational administration from the
14 University of Minnesota; and

15 WHEREAS, Dr. Robert Willis has had a long and distinguished
16 career in education; he began his career teaching physical
17 science and biology and coaching varsity football in the town
18 where his entire family was raised; he was subsequently hired
19 as the principal of an inner city elementary school in St.
20 Paul, Minnesota and later, led school districts in Minnesota
21 and South Dakota before becoming superintendent in Rock Island
22 and Des Plaines; and

1 WHEREAS, As superintendent, Dr. Robert Willis worked to
2 develop a clear vision for those school districts, improving
3 student performance, creating innovative year-round schools,
4 and pushing for the use of new technology to advance and
5 improve the learning experience for students and staff; and

6 WHEREAS, Dr. Robert Willis expanded his educational reach
7 as a consultant and trainer, creating community visions for
8 several Illinois school districts, helping institutions build
9 parent partnerships to improve student learning in No Child
10 Left Behind schools, and teaching graduate level courses at
11 National-Louis University and Northern Illinois University;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Dr. Robert Willis led his Leadership Team in the
14 effort to formulate a vision for all children built on a
15 foundation of goals called Readiness Rocks, which include
16 College and Career Academies, Seven Periods to Success,
17 Preschool for All, 21st Century Learning Environments, and
18 College for All; and

19 WHEREAS, During Dr. Robert Willis' tenure, preschool
20 enrollment increased by 600 students for a total enrollment of
21 2,400 three and four year olds during the 2012 school year; and

22 WHEREAS, Dr. Robert Willis led the effort for the

1 district's school board to reduce property taxes by \$18 million
2 for the 2012 tax levy to provide property tax relief for
3 district taxpayers; and

4 WHEREAS, Dr. Robert Willis was instrumental in the
5 community effort to pass the November 2012 general election
6 referendum, which gave the Rockford School District authority
7 to proceed with the largest and most comprehensive building
8 renovation and improvement plan in the district's history; the
9 first phase of the plan will result in \$212 million worth of
10 school improvements over 5 years; and

11 WHEREAS, Dr. Robert Willis has led his school community
12 with dignity, honor, and respect using a "servant leadership"
13 approach; and

14 WHEREAS, In 2006, Dr. Robert Willis began serving as
15 Executive Director of the Rock River chapter of the American
16 Red Cross; under his leadership, the chapter grew to represent
17 more than 500,000 people in the Rock River Valley; and

18 WHEREAS, Dr. Robert Willis was the recipient of the
19 Illinois State Board of Education's "Break the Mold" award, a
20 distinction that honors extraordinary innovation and
21 commitment to educational leadership; and

1 WHEREAS, Dr. Robert Willis and his loving wife of 48 years,
2 Judy, have 3 children and 6 grandchildren; and

3 WHEREAS, Dr. Robert Willis serves as a model of hard work,
4 integrity, and dedication for the people of the State of
5 Illinois; therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
7 NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
8 we honor Dr. Robert Willis for his work as the Interim
9 Superintendent of Rockford Public Schools, congratulate him on
10 his retirement, and wish him continued success and happiness in
11 the future; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
13 presented to Robert Willis as a symbol of our esteem and
14 respect.