



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 Vernita
4 Gray of Chicago; and

5 WHEREAS, Vernita Gray has dedicated most of her life to the
6 struggle for LGBT equality and has served Chicago's gay,
7 lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered community with
8 distinction since the late 1960s; she helped found Chicago's
9 first lesbian newspaper, Lavender Women, helped organize the
10 City's first Pride Parade, and set-up one of Chicago's first
11 gay information hotlines, which she operated out of her
12 apartment; she was instrumental in forming the first Lesbian
13 Caucus of the nascent Gay Liberation organization in the early
14 1970s; and

15 WHEREAS, Since 1993, Vernita Gray has aided the LGBT
16 community through her work at the Cook County State's Attorney
17 office, where she was the LGBT victim-witness coordinator,
18 working with victims of hate crimes, domestic violence, and the
19 families of homicide victims; after 6 years she was promoted to
20 LGBT liaison, where she was responsible for reaching out to
21 communities in Cook County; her favorite task was speaking to
22 high school students about hate crimes and issues of violence
23 in the community, for which she was awarded the Stonewall

1 Award; she led the effort to see that gays and lesbians were
2 included in the annual Bud Billiken parade when they had
3 traditionally been excluded; and

4 WHEREAS, Vernita Gray worked beside President Barack Obama
5 as a member of the LGBT advisory council when he was an
6 Illinois State Senator, and she attended the Democratic
7 National Convention in Denver and President Obama's
8 inauguration in Washington, D.C.; and

9 WHEREAS, Vernita Gray was inducted into the Chicago Gay and
10 Lesbian Hall of Fame in 1992 for her efforts as an early leader
11 in the gay-liberation movement; and

12 WHEREAS, Vernita Gray married her wife, Pat Ewert, on
13 November 27, 2013, becoming the first same-sex couple married
14 in Illinois as a result of being plaintiffs in a federal court
15 case that allowed the couple to wed early, despite the law not
16 going into effect until June 1, 2014; and

17 WHEREAS, Vernita Gray was a Chicago business owner for 11
18 years, operating the "Sol Sands" restaurant and a second
19 company that develops audio visual materials for children; she
20 is a graduate of Columbia College with a degree in writing and
21 communications and published "Sweet Sixteen", a volume of her
22 own poetry; and

1 WHEREAS, Later in life, Vernita Gray devoted much of her
2 time to bring attention to the issue of aging gays and
3 lesbians, which she felt was often overlooked and that there
4 was still much work to be done; she served on the Task Force of
5 the Aging, the LGBT advisory committee to the AARP, and the
6 National Gay and Lesbian Senior Task Force; therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
8 NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
9 we mourn the passing of Vernita Gray, and extend our sincere
10 condolences to her family, friends, and all who knew and loved
11 her; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
13 presented to the family of Vernita Gray as an expression of our
14 deepest sympathy.