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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois General Assembly wish to congratulate Mike Lawrence on the occasion of his retirement and thank him for his many decades of service to the people of Illinois; and

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WHEREAS, Mike Lawrence recently left his fourth career, stepping down as advisor to the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois; and

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WHEREAS, Mike Lawrence was born in Chicago and raised in Galesburg, where his keen mind and attention to details were honed at the Sunday dinner table by his history educator-trained father, Mark, and his mother, Gladys, who encouraged debate that included Mike and his younger sister, Susie, and challenged them to support their comments by facts; and

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WHEREAS, Mike took these lessons learned to own and operate his own newspaper at the age of 11; the two to four page Lawrence Weekly had a circulation of 20, with the copies created by Mike using his well-known, aggressive hunt and peck style on his typewriter, making multiple copies with carbon paper in the days before copy machines; it was during this time that he earned the nickname "Scoop"; and

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1 WHEREAS, Mike Lawrence continued his journalism career,
2 earning his first byline at the Galesburg Register-Mail,
3 reporting on little league baseball games at the age of 14; his
4 first paycheck for reporting came at the Register-Mail when he
5 was 16; he continued to sharpen his writing skills as Sports
6 Editor of his junior high newspaper and Editor-in-Chief of his
7 high school newspaper, where he interviewed Governor William
8 Stratton in what would be the first of his many interactions
9 with this and future chief executives of the State of Illinois;
10 he was also Editor-in-Chief of the student newspaper at Knox
11 College in Galesburg, where he received his post-secondary
12 education and graduated with a bachelor's degree in literature
13 in 1964; and

14 WHEREAS, Mike Lawrence went on to work in journalism for 25
15 years; during his newspaper career, he served stints as
16 Managing Editor and Editorial Page Editor of the Quad-City
17 Times; specializing in Illinois State government and politics,
18 he wrote a political column that was syndicated to more than 40
19 newspapers in Illinois; he capped his newspaper career in the
20 Springfield Statehouse, opening a bureau for Lee Enterprises
21 and finishing his first career, as journalist, as the
22 Statehouse Bureau Chief for the Chicago Sun-Times; he was known
23 as a deeply probing, yet fair, investigative reporter; and

1 WHEREAS, Mike Lawrence became Press Secretary to
2 then-Secretary of State Jim Edgar in 1987, following him to the
3 Governor's office in 1991 and continuing to serve as his Press
4 Secretary and one of his closest advisors; the Lawrence-Edgar
5 relationship was built on mutual trust and respect, with
6 Lawrence feeling that as an advisor it was important to be
7 "frank, blunt, and even argumentative with the boss"; that
8 relationship led to a strong friendship which continues today;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, In 1997, Mike Lawrence joined the Paul Simon
11 Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University
12 Carbondale as Associate Director; he became Director of the
13 Institute in 2004, succeeding its founding director, the late
14 Paul Simon; while at the Institute, he taught both journalism
15 and political science classes and mentored countless students;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, In 2008, Mike Lawrence retired as Director of the
18 Paul Simon Public Policy Institute; he then used his new-found
19 time to reinvigorate his investigative reporter skills,
20 writing a column for the commentary pages of the St. Louis
21 Post-Dispatch, the State Journal-Register, the Quad City
22 Times, the Champaign News Gazette, the Southern Illinoisan, and
23 other newspapers; he was also sought out as an Illinois
24 government and public policy speaker and advisor; and

1 WHEREAS, Mike Lawrence has been recognized for his
2 tremendous contributions to journalism and State government;
3 he was honored by the Associated Press Editors Association in
4 2003 for his exemplary service to other journalists and
5 newspapers in Illinois and received the Paul Simon Award for
6 Public Service from the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform
7 in 2006; he also received the Illinoisan of the Year award in
8 2008 from the Illinois News Broadcaster Association; and

9 WHEREAS, In 1998, Mike Lawrence received an honorary Doctor
10 of Laws degree from his alma mater, Knox College; he also
11 served on the Illinois Courts Commission, which decides cases
12 in which disciplinary charges have been brought against judges,
13 and was also one of the first non-judges appointed to serve on
14 the commission; and

15 WHEREAS, Mike Lawrence has served as a key advisor to
16 Governor Edgar at the Institute of Government and Public
17 Affairs at the University of Illinois since 2011; he was
18 instrumental in helping create the Edgar Fellows program in
19 2012, choosing up to 40 up-and-comers in Illinois public policy
20 for intensive executive training and on-going relationship
21 building opportunities each year since then; therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE

1 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
2 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we thank Mike Lawrence for his
3 many years of service and the work he has done to shape many
4 generations involved in public service in the State of
5 Illinois, providing a shining example of hard work, integrity,
6 and thoughtful insights, and wish him all the best in his
7 future endeavors; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
9 presented to Mike Lawrence, his wife, Marianne, his son, Matt,
10 and his daughter, Katy, as an expression of our congratulations
11 and appreciation for a job well done.