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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, John Jones was one of the most prominent advocates
3 for the repeal of what were known as the "Black Codes", a
4 series of laws that were designed to restrict the ability of
5 African Americans to experience citizenship and equality; and

6 WHEREAS, John Jones was born a free man in Greene County,
7 North Carolina; he became an indentured servant to a tailor
8 named Richard Clere, who transferred his contract as an
9 apprentice to another man; he became concerned that the family
10 of the man for whom he did his apprenticeship might attempt to
11 claim him as a slave, and so, in a preemptive move, obtained a
12 Certificate of Freedom in 1838; he then moved to Alton, a
13 certified and bona fide free person; he moved to Chicago in
14 1845, where he set up a successful tailoring shop on Dearborn
15 Street; and

16 WHEREAS, Once in Chicago, John Jones began to fight for
17 equal rights for people of color; in 1850, President Millard
18 Fillmore signed the Fugitive Slave Act, giving slaveholders the
19 right to seek runaway slaves in the free states; he forcefully
20 denounced the Fugitive Slave Act, and he and 6 other men, set
21 up Liberty Association to watch for slave catchers seeking
22 runaway slaves; he and his wife, Mary, brought fugitive slaves
23 and anti-slavery activists into their home, including John

1 Brown and Frederick Douglass; and

2 WHEREAS, In 1864, the Chicago Tribune printed John Jones'
3 pamphlet entitled "The Black Laws of Illinois and a Few Reasons
4 Why They Should Be Repealed"; he approached Illinois General
5 Assembly members and spoke to them at the State House (now the
6 Old State Capitol Building) about why the Black Codes should be
7 eliminated; his efforts succeeded in February of 1865 when the
8 General Assembly voted in favor of repealing the Codes; and

9 WHEREAS, John Jones went on to be elected as the first
10 black Cook County Commissioner in 1871, serving a second term
11 from 1872 until 1875; during his time in office, he helped pass
12 legislation that outlawed segregation in local schools; his
13 tailoring business continued to thrive; after his death on May
14 21, 1879, the Chicago Tribune reported that he had been the
15 most prominent black citizen in the City; and

16 WHEREAS, John Jones refused to allow the discrimination of
17 African Americans to continue unchallenged in Chicago and
18 throughout the nation; his efforts brought about real change in
19 Illinois, moving the State closer to true equality; he
20 dedicated much of his time, energy, and money to the repeal of
21 these repressive laws; therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE

1 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
2 honor abolitionist and civil rights pioneer John Jones for his
3 tireless efforts in fighting for the repeal of the Illinois
4 Black Codes; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
6 presented to the family of John Jones as an expression of our
7 esteem and respect.