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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The first total solar eclipse to occur along a path across the entire continental United States since 1918 will occur on August 21, 2017; and

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WHEREAS, The point of greatest duration for the eclipse on August 21, 2017 will occur along a line of totality stretching northwest to southeast across Southern Illinois; and

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WHEREAS, A second total solar eclipse will occur seven years later on April 8, 2024, with a line of totality stretching southwest to northeast across Southern Illinois; and

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WHEREAS, The centerline of totality for both eclipses will intersect over Cedar Lake, just a few miles south of Carbondale; and

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WHEREAS, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, which is ranked among the top 5% percent of all United States higher education institutions for research, will host educational events and activities for NASA and other top scientists from around the world, as well as the general public; and

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WHEREAS, Roughly 250,000 visitors are estimated to travel

1 to within a 100 mile radius of the intersection of eclipse
2 totality in Southern Illinois on or about August 21, 2017 and
3 April 8, 2024 to experience the total solar eclipses; and

4 WHEREAS, The sudden influx of visitors to Southern Illinois
5 on or about August 21, 2017 and April 8, 2024 will provide
6 much-needed, long-term economic opportunity for the southern
7 16 counties of Illinois; and

8 WHEREAS, The 16 southernmost counties of Illinois
9 historically suffer from high rates of poverty, low economic
10 opportunity and related socio-economic problems, and
11 accordingly, are part of the Delta region; and

12 WHEREAS, Congress established efforts in 2000 to improve
13 regional economic opportunity in the Delta region through
14 strategic investments that create jobs, build communities, and
15 improve the lives of the 10 million people who reside in the
16 252 counties and parishes of the eight-state Delta Region; and

17 WHEREAS, It has been found that:

18 (1) The overall population in the Southern Illinois
19 Delta region has fallen by 4.5% since 1980; the population
20 grew in only four counties between the 2000 and 2010
21 census, and only two counties (Johnson and Williamson) grew

1 since the 2010 census based on 2015 estimates;

2 (2) Between 2010 and 2015, Illinois Delta counties saw
3 a net population change of -6,038; Illinois was the only
4 state in the Delta region to experience a negative natural
5 increase and negative net migration in its Delta counties;
6 the natural increase in Illinois was -730 (12%) and net
7 migration -5,308 (88%);

8 (3) Economic data shows that the Southern Illinois
9 economy lags behind the nation in its recovery from the
10 effects of the "Great Recession" that officially began in
11 December of 2007 and ended in June of 2009; while the
12 United States had recovered all jobs lost in the Great
13 Recession by April of 2014, Illinois remains over 18% short
14 of regaining its lost jobs as of April of 2015;

15 (4) Illinois is only one of two Delta states that saw
16 a decline in job growth between 2010 and 2015; annual
17 growth rate for jobs in Illinois was -0.1%, surpassed only
18 by Alabama with -0.5%;

19 (5) The poverty rate in Southern Illinois has
20 consistently surpassed that of the State rate of 14.3%; six
21 counties, Alexander, Hardin, Jackson, Massac, Pulaski, and
22 Saline, have poverty exceeding 20%, and Alexander and the

1 Jackson county poverty rate exceeds 30%;

2 (6) The poverty rate for those under age 18 is equal
3 to or exceeds 30% in seven counties, Alexander, Hardin,
4 Jackson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, and Saline;

5 (7) Strengths of the Southern Illinois region include
6 strategic location with proximity to major Midwest urban
7 centers, multi-modal transportation systems, and natural
8 resources including oil, coal timber, and agriculture, and
9 scenic, natural, recreational, historic, cultural, and
10 archeological resources;

11 (8) Opportunities in the Southern Illinois region
12 include tourism potential, especially "heritage tourism",
13 broadband expansion, improved support for entrepreneurs,
14 development of specialty and value-added agriculture
15 products, and marketing the region as a whole; and

16 (9) Threats to the Southern Illinois region include
17 aging infrastructure and lack of sewer capacity in some
18 areas, continued population decline, and low tax base; and

19 WHEREAS, The sudden influx of visitors to the region will
20 stress existing infrastructure and services, including roads,
21 broadband, housing and accommodations, health care, public

1 safety, and potential disaster response; and

2 WHEREAS, The total solar eclipses on August 21, 2017 and
3 April 8, 2024 will provide a unique opportunity to showcase the
4 scenic, natural, historic, recreational, archeological, and
5 cultural resources of Southern Illinois; and

6 WHEREAS, Due to the anticipated 250,000 visitors to
7 Southern Illinois on or about August 21, 2017, there is an
8 urgent need to direct resources to the region that supports
9 entrepreneurship, job creation, hospitality training, heritage
10 tourism, workforce development, infrastructure, and disaster
11 response; therefore, be it

12 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
13 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
14 declare the month of August of 2016 as "Southern Illinois
15 Eclipse Crossroads Awareness Month"; and be it further

16 RESOLVED, That we support development of a regional
17 organization to ensure sustainable, long-term economic
18 development that balances meeting immediate needs while
19 dedicating resources to strategic and long-term goals; and be
20 it further

21 RESOLVED, That we encourage development of a marketing plan

1 for regional branding around the solar eclipse and general
2 regional tourism and economic development in Southern Illinois
3 that coordinates and leverages investment by federal, State and
4 local government entities, private business, non-profit, and
5 non-governmental organizations; and

6 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
7 delivered to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, the U.S.
8 Secretary of Commerce, the U.S. Under Secretary of Commerce for
9 Oceans, Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator, the U.S. Secretary
10 of Transportation, the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, and
11 the Chairman of the Delta Regional Authority.