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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Long before Lewis and Clark, our region was home to the ancient societies of Mississippian Culture and the beginnings of urbanism in the eastern woodlands; it was from these societies that today's great Indian Nations sprang, with cultural connections from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and along the mighty Mississippi; the beginnings of this urban civilization was spread over 6 counties of eastern Missouri and southwestern Illinois; and

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WHEREAS, At the sea of verdure, the fertile American Bottom stretches bluff to bluff at the confluence of America's greatest rivers, the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, cradling the birth of millennia of agriculture and the rise of the Mississippian Culture; Cahokia Mounds and its mound complexes thrived on the cultivation and trading of corn, with their surplus allowing them to rise and become the "Center of the Universe" of the Mississippian Culture, trading to the north, south, east, and west; and

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WHEREAS, Dating from the Mississippian period (800-1350 AD), Cahokia Mounds, covering 3,950 acres, is the earliest and largest pre-Columbian archaeological site north of Mexico and the pre-eminent example of a cultural, religious, and economic center of the pre-historic Mississippian cultural tradition,

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1 which extended throughout the Mississippi Valley and the
2 southeastern United States; and

3 WHEREAS, With a population of 10,000-30,000 at its peak
4 between 1050 and 1150AD, Cahokia Mounds is an early and
5 exceptional example of pre-urban/urban structuring,
6 graphically demonstrating the existence of a society in which a
7 powerful political and economic hierarchy was responsible for
8 the organization of labor, agriculture, and trade; this is
9 reflected in the size and layout of the settlement and the
10 nature and structure of the public and private buildings; and

11 WHEREAS, Cahokia Mounds' unique role in the nation's
12 history was recognized by the National Park Service through its
13 designation as a National Historic Landmark in 1964 and its
14 placement on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, Cahokia Mounds' global significance was
17 recognized by the United Nations Education Scientific and
18 Cultural Organization through its designation as a World
19 Heritage Site in 1982; and

20 WHEREAS, Since 1925, State, local, and private funds have
21 been invested in the Cahokia Mounds Historic Site for
22 acquisition and protection; a formal national park service

1 designation would capitalize on this investment; and

2 WHEREAS, Cahokia Mounds and its ancient non-contiguous
3 satellite settlements are today in need of additional
4 protection to secure the most significant remnants of the
5 largest Native American civilization on the North American
6 continent north of Mexico from active and passive threats; and

7 WHEREAS, Over the last 24 months, with guidance from the
8 Indian Nations, federal agencies, Illinois and Missouri state
9 agencies, and local units of government, HeartLands
10 Conservancy developed a thorough, compelling, and rigorous
11 study that met National Park Service standards and criteria
12 demonstrating the feasibility of elevating the status and
13 national designation of Cahokia Mounds; the surrounding mound
14 complexes in the region and their significance, suitability,
15 and feasibility as a potential formal unit of the National Park
16 Service would ensure that these precious ancient
17 archaeological resources are protected and accessible for all
18 people to experience; and

19 WHEREAS, Conducting 13 public meetings, media interviews,
20 stakeholder meetings, outreach to 13 tribes/nations, and over
21 890 surveys, HeartLands Conservancy received support for the
22 study's recommendations and showed that local communities
23 would benefit from revitalized and protected sites with

1 enhanced interpretive and educational programs to teach about
2 the Mississippian Culture, its ancestral significance, and the
3 numerous associated historic traces and cultural themes; and

4 WHEREAS, The study captured the significance of the region
5 and its ancient history by demonstrating that, through
6 cooperative protection and partnerships, it can remain
7 connected and intact in order to properly interpret remaining
8 sites as well as offering opportunities to protect, enhance,
9 and interpret the natural environment along the Mounds Heritage
10 Trail corridor; and

11 WHEREAS, National parks generate \$31 billion for local
12 economies each year and are shown to invigorate neighborhood
13 historic renovation and spur business growth; they also provide
14 opportunities for tourism and economic development, natural
15 resource conservation, and improvements of the quality of life
16 for residents of nearby communities; and

17 WHEREAS, There are no other mounds within the National Park
18 Service that represent the Mississippian Culture as
19 holistically and uniquely as the Cahokia Mounds; combined with
20 the surrounding satellite mound centers, Cahokia emerges as the
21 most significant and unsurpassed example of its time period;
22 and

1 WHEREAS, The great region of southwestern Illinois and
2 eastern Missouri will, with the assistance of the Indian
3 Nations, become a center of cultural outreach and enrichment by
4 embracing our nation's earliest heritage and re-engaging our
5 ancient past as a foundation for the 21st century; and

6 WHEREAS, Legislation will be introduced in Congress to
7 create the Mississippian Culture National Historical Park in
8 Southwestern Illinois, which, with thematically-connected
9 non-contiguous mound complexes in the St. Louis Metropolitan
10 Region, will recognize the significance of the Mississippian
11 Culture and its unique national significance in agriculture,
12 ancestral ties, and its status as one of America's first
13 cities; and

14 WHEREAS, There is a strong consensus that now is the time
15 for immediate action to further develop the Cahokia Mounds and
16 thematically-connected mound complexes to realize their full
17 potential; with new transportation access across the
18 Mississippi River completed and the rebound of the economy,
19 there is even greater pressure to develop this; therefore, be
20 it

21 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL
22 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
23 CONCURRING HEREIN, that we show our support for the

1 recommendations in "The Mounds - America's First Cities - A
2 Feasibility Study" by HeartLands Conservancy and iterate that
3 not only should the State of Illinois continue to own and
4 operate the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site and have a
5 collaborative partnership with the National Park Service, but
6 other communities, agencies, and entities should play a role in
7 redeveloping and re-energizing these sites and establish
8 strong and lasting partnerships; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That we urge the citizens of this State to
10 actively join HeartLands Conservancy, the Governor of
11 Illinois, and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency in the
12 Mississippian Culture Initiative; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That we urge Congress to elevate the national
14 status of the Cahokia Mounds and thematically-connected Mound
15 Complexes that are deemed suitable and nationally-significant
16 as a non-contiguous National Historical Park; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That we alternatively call upon the President to
18 exercise his authority by Executive Order to designate the
19 Cahokia Mounds as a National Monument; and be it further

20 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
21 delivered to the Governor, the members of the Illinois
22 congressional delegation, National Park Service Director

1 Jonathan Jarvis, and President Barack Obama.