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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, 150 years ago this week, Illinois became the first state in the union to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution; and

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WHEREAS, The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in America, stating, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction"; and

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WHEREAS, Illinois' native son, President Abraham Lincoln, who in 1863 had issued the Emancipation Proclamation freeing all persons held as slaves in Confederate territory, exerted the full influence of his office to ensure Congressional passage of the Thirteenth Amendment and propel the train of freedom farther down history's long track; and

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WHEREAS, On February 1, 1865, after receiving word that the United States House of Representatives had approved the Thirteenth Amendment, Illinois Governor Richard J. Oglesby informed the General Assembly of its passage and urged its immediate ratification on the grounds that doing so was "just" and "humane"; three and a half hours later, the amendment stood ratified by both chambers; and

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1 WHEREAS, The Thirteenth Amendment officially became the
2 law of the land on December 18, 1865 after 27 states - 19 in the
3 north and west, and 8 in the south - had ratified it; and

4 WHEREAS, Each February, the nation observes Black History
5 Month, a time of teaching and learning about the black men and
6 women who are an integral part of our nation's narrative and
7 have made outstanding contributions to national life and the
8 ongoing struggle for freedom, justice, and equality; and

9 WHEREAS, The addition of the Thirteenth Amendment to the
10 United States Constitution marked a turning point in the
11 history of American race relations; by no means the end of
12 discrimination, injustice and oppression, which persists today
13 and which we unequivocally oppose, but the beginning of a road
14 that led through Jim Crow, Brown v. Board of Education, Selma,
15 and to the nation's first black president and beyond;
16 therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL
18 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that February of 2015 shall
19 be known as Thirteenth Amendment Ratification Month in
20 recognition of the sesquicentennial of the Twenty-fourth
21 Illinois General Assembly's history-making vote for abolition
22 and the Thirteenth Amendment's vital place in the annals of

1 American history; and be it further

2 RESOLVED, That schools, civic organizations, and other
3 institutions in the State of Illinois, as they observe Black
4 History Month, are also encouraged to study the passage and
5 ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, the leaders who
6 brought the State and nation to this historic moment, and the
7 effects of ratification on Illinoisans and Americans of all
8 races.