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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened to learn of the death of George W. Swenson Jr. of Savoy, who passed away on February 22, 2017; and

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WHEREAS, George Swenson was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota to George W. Sr. and Vernie Swenson on September 22, 1922; he earned his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Michigan Technological University in 1944 by correspondence while serving on active duty in the United States Army as a second lieutenant in the Signal Corps; he received his master's degree in electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1947, and his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in 1949; and

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WHEREAS, George Swenson taught electrical engineering at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, and Michigan State University in East Lansing; he then began a 60-year career at the University of Illinois; he authored, "The Principles of Modern Acoustics", while an associate professor of electrical engineering at Washington University; and

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WHEREAS, George Swenson traveled around the world in the late 1950s, studying research installations in New Zealand,

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1 Australia, England, Europe, and the Soviet Union; he designed
2 and built what was at the time the largest and most productive
3 radio telescope on the planet near Danville - the VRO
4 (Vermilion River Observatory); he was responsible for
5 discovering, mapping, and cataloging thousands of new radio
6 sources throughout the universe during its 20-plus-year
7 research life; this propelled the University of Illinois to the
8 forefront of radio astronomy research; he produced a receiver
9 and tracking system, which became the foundation of the
10 Satellite Ionosphere research group, which flourished for
11 decades on the University of Illinois campus; and

12 WHEREAS, From 1964 to 1968, George Swenson chaired the
13 design committee for the VLA (Vary Large Array), the iconic
14 radio telescope that is shown on television daily; in the
15 1970s, he became interim chairman of the Astronomy Department
16 at the University of Illinois; in 1979, he became chairman of
17 the Electrical Engineering Department at the University, which
18 lasted to 1985; he resigned from that position to return to his
19 research for two years before retiring officially in 1987; he
20 still had many years of research and mentoring graduate
21 students in master's and Ph.D. programs; he held a position
22 with the United States Army Corps of Engineers Laboratory in
23 Champaign for decades doing research in acoustics; while with
24 the Lab, he developed an automated monitoring system for
25 tracking radio-tagged animals; and

1 WHEREAS, George Swenson spent parts of a number of summers
2 advising on technical aspects of wildlife research on Barrow
3 Colorado Island, a research station in the Panama Canal
4 supported by The Smithsonian Institute; he was regularly
5 recognized for his achievements, including memberships in
6 organizations such as the National Academy of Sciences and the
7 National Academy of Engineers; and

8 WHEREAS, As a youth the Huron Mountains of Michigan's Upper
9 Peninsula were George Swenson's favorite stomping grounds; he
10 climbed regularly in the Cascades and other northwest ranges in
11 the early 1950s and later in the Alaska Range from 1954 to
12 1956; one of his first ascents was Institute Peak, Alaska, an
13 8,000-foot climb for which he received naming honors with his
14 team; he trekked in Australia and New Zealand at various times
15 and at about 60 years of age, he traversed the 45-mile
16 Greenstone Ridge Trail on Isle Royale solo; he was an avid
17 canoeist and circumnavigated Isle Royale and nearly completed a
18 circumnavigation of Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula; and

19 WHEREAS, George Swenson was an avid birder; he compiled a
20 life list all over the Alaskan and Canadian Arctic, North
21 America, Central and South America, Australia, New Zealand and
22 more; he built a family camp on Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula
23 that he started in 1962 and which is still in use today; he and

1 his wife donated an 80-acre patch of Keweenaw woods to the
2 Michigan Nature Association which has become the "Gratiot Lake
3 Overlook Nature Sanctuary"; and

4 WHEREAS, In 1995, George Swenson flew into Bettles, Alaska
5 and spent two weeks on the Noatak River in The Gates of the
6 Arctic National Preserve; he had been in every part of Alaska;
7 he visited the North Pole in February of 1963; and

8 WHEREAS, George Swenson was a supporter of conservation
9 organizations; he regularly contributed to The Nature
10 Conservancy, The Michigan Nature Association, and many others;
11 he earned a private pilot license in 1955, and flew regularly
12 until 2011 at the age of 88; around 2005, he received a
13 citation from the FAA for 50 years of flying without an
14 incident; and

15 WHEREAS, George Swenson was preceded in death by his
16 parents; his brother, Ward V. Swenson; his sister-in-law,
17 Roseann Peterson Swenson; and his grand-nephew, Andrew C.
18 Vadnais; and

19 WHEREAS, George Swenson is survived by his wife of 46
20 years, Joy Janice Swenson; his children, George W. "Jud" III
21 (Mary Knight) Swenson, Laura Swenson, Julie L. (John) Carney,
22 and Donna J. (Mark) Jones; his grandchildren, Kevin (Jamie)

1 McQuain, Ren (Steff) Farrar, Arthur E. (Melissa) Jones, Mark C.
2 (Elizabeth) Jones, and Madeleine (fiancee Boomer Braun)
3 Swenson; his great-grandsons, Dylan McQuain and Elliot Jones;
4 and six nephews and nieces and their children and
5 grandchildren; therefore, be it

6 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDREDTH GENERAL
7 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
8 George W. Swenson Jr., and extend our sincere condolences to
9 his family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be it
10 further

11 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
12 presented to the family of George Swenson as an expression of
13 our deepest sympathy.