



1

HOUSE RESOLUTION

2

WHEREAS, During World War II, Joseph W. Sparks answered the call of his country and valiantly served as a member of the 477th Composite Group based at Godman Field, Kentucky; the 477th Composite Group, the first all-Black Bomber-Fighter air squadron in U.S. history, had four squadrons of bomber and fighter planes; and

8

WHEREAS, Mr. Sparks graduated with the first class of African Americans to be qualified as aerial radio operators at Scott Field Air Base in 1944; he was also in the first class of African Americans to graduate from aerial gunnery school at the Yuma Arizona Air Force Base in 1944; and

13

WHEREAS, He went on training fights as a radio operator with First Lieutenant Daniel James Jr. as a member of the 617th Bombardment Squadron at Godman Field, Kentucky, in 1944; Lieutenant James went on to become the first African-American four star general; he also served with James Y. Carter who went on to serve in the Illinois General Assembly and was Vehicle Commissioner for the City of Chicago, Winston A. Adkins, a police sergeant at 51st and Wentworth in Chicago, A.A. Rayner, a former Chicago alderman and funeral director, and Charles W. Diggs, who became a U.S. Congressman from Michigan; and

23

WHEREAS, As a radio operator mechanic, Sergeant Sparks operated airborne transmitting and receiving equipment; he sent and received messages using Morse code; he performed in-flight maintenance on equipment and tune adjusted his own equipment; he operated at a rate of 20 words per minute; he also had two 50-caliber machine guns to operate, one on each side of the B-25 bomber; and

30

WHEREAS, The squadron was initially named the 477th Bombardment Group; the name was changed in June of 1945 to the

31

1 477th Composite Group, when leadership of the group was handed
2 over the General B.O. Davis, Sr.; it was the first and only
3 U.S. Army installation within the continental U.S. to be
4 commanded and staffed completely by African-American
5 personnel; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Sparks went on to work with the Chicago
7 Transit Authority and was honored for 31 years of public
8 service as a bus driver and for his volunteer work in the
9 Englewood Community as Chairman of the 7th Police District
10 Youth Corps; he drove streetcar #7213, Chicago's last
11 streetcar, during the mid-1950s; therefore, be it

12 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
13 NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
14 we honor Joseph W. Sparks for his service as a member of the
15 477th Composite Group during World War II, for his many years
16 of public and community service, and for his efforts to educate
17 Americans on the 477th Composite Group; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
19 presented to Mr. Sparks as an expression of our sincerest
20 respect and esteem.