



HR1514

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are pleased to congratulate Reverend Doctor Lena J. McLin of Chicago on her 80th birthday; and

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WHEREAS, Prompted by a calling from God on August 9, 1981, Lena McLin started a bible class in a small meeting room in the Conrad Hilton Hotel in downtown Chicago; during the next several months, Dr. McLin fervently studied the Holy Bible and attended divinity training classes and on February 26, 1982, Dr. McLin was officially ordained as a minister; the bible classes became services at Holy Vessel Baptist Church, and Dr. McLin was the pastor and the Minister of Music; and

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WHEREAS, Once established at a permanent address, Dr. McLin implemented outreach programs to help the Hyde Park community; the church began providing food, clothing, bus and train fares, temporary shelter, and Christian counseling to distressed men, women, and children; in 2008, Holy Vessel celebrated its 27th anniversary, and Dr. McLin celebrated her 26th anniversary as an ordained minister of God; and

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WHEREAS, When she was five-years-old, Dr. Lena J. McLin (nee Johnson) was sent from her home in Atlanta, Georgia to Chicago to live with her "Uncle Ted", otherwise known as Thomas

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1 A. Dorsey, the father of Gospel music, and attended McCosh
2 Elementary School; after moving back to Atlanta, she graduated
3 from Booker T. Washington High School in 1947; she earned a
4 Bachelor of Music degree in piano and violin in 1951 at Spelman
5 College; she earned her Master of Music degree at the American
6 Conservatory of Music in Chicago; she also studied at Roosevelt
7 University and Chicago State University; and

8 WHEREAS, She started her teaching career at Julius H. Hess
9 Upper Grade Center in 1959, moving to Hubbard High School in
10 1960; and

11 WHEREAS, As a founder of the McLin Ensemble and the McLin
12 Opera Company, she created performance opportunities for
13 African-American musicians; she taught at John Marshall Harlan
14 High School from 1963 to 1970, leaving to teach at the new
15 Kenwood Academy in Hyde Park; though Dr. McLin officially
16 retired from Kenwood in the mid-1990s, she has not stopped
17 educating and continues to teach vocal students at her South
18 Shore home every week; and

19 WHEREAS, Dr. McLin was born to be a musician; her mother
20 played the piano in their church in Atlanta, Georgia and when
21 Dr. McLin moved to Chicago to live with her uncle, Thomas A.
22 Dorsey, he had her serve as an accompanist for his famous
23 Pilgrim Baptist Church choir; and

1 WHEREAS, She has penned more than 400 published
2 compositions including cantatas, masses, solo and choral
3 arrangements of spirituals, anthems, art songs, Gospel songs,
4 rock operas, soul and pop songs, works for piano and orchestra,
5 and electronic music; one of her most famous compositions is
6 the cantata *Free At Last: A Portrait Of Martin Luther King Jr.*,
7 which she composed the night following the death of her
8 childhood friend Dr. King; she had already titled the cantata
9 before it was revealed that those same words would be engraved
10 on King's headstone; and

11 WHEREAS, She composed *Gwendolyn Brooks: A Musical*
12 *Portrait*, written for Illinois' official poet laureate; Dr.
13 McLin, along with her choirs and singers from schools and
14 churches, has performed at dozens of events for the City of
15 Chicago; and

16 WHEREAS, She performed at the very first Chicago Gospelfest
17 in 1985, which originally was named in honor of her uncle,
18 Thomas A. Dorsey; she returned to the Gospelfest for its 10th
19 anniversary, and performed on-stage with Gospel music legends
20 Andre Crouch and Jesse Dixon; and

21 WHEREAS, For her many achievements as a master musician,
22 Dr. McLin was featured in the acclaimed P.B.S. television

1 series "The History Makers", which chronicles significant
2 contributions that Blacks have made to America's culture; and

3 WHEREAS, Her 80th birthday celebration was held on
4 September 5, 2008 at Harambee House in Chicago; she was
5 surprised by many friends, family, her countless famous former
6 students, colleagues, and others whose lives she has touched;
7 therefore, be it

8 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
9 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
10 congratulate Reverend Doctor Lena J. McLin on this momentous
11 occasion and wish her continued health, happiness, and music in
12 her life; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
14 presented to Reverend Doctor Lena J. McLin as a symbol of our
15 respect and esteem.