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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 Dr. Robert L. Johnson, Sr. of Chicago; and

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WHEREAS, Dr. Robert Johnson was born in Helena, Arkansas on July 27, 1930; he was one of five children born to Joe Johnson, Sr. and Catherine Chatman Johnson; he attended Helena schools and graduated from Eliza Miller High School in Helena, Arkansas; and

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WHEREAS, His love of learning and football led him to attend Xavier University on a football scholarship where he met his soul-mate, Mercedes Sylvest, who would later become his wife and mother of their five daughters and one son; and

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WHEREAS, Dr. Johnson received his Master of Science degree from the University of Chicago in 1954, and later graduated from the Illinois College of Optometry in 1960; in 1959, he co-founded Plano Child Development Center and as President of Plano, thousands of families have seen remarkable improvements in school achievement and behavior through low-cost and sometimes free vision health education, vision exams, and vision therapy; and

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1           WHEREAS, As a community activist, Dr. Johnson helped to  
2 elect Mayor Harold Washington the first African-American mayor  
3 of Chicago, and his childhood friend, President John H.  
4 Stroger, Jr. the first African-American president of the Cook  
5 County Board of Commissioners, along with other local  
6 politicians; and

7           WHEREAS, In the 1970s, he organized Vision Health  
8 Management Systems Inc., a vision Preferred Provider  
9 Organization (PPO) in Chicago, Washington, DC, New Orleans, and  
10 Atlanta, serving thousands of employees in city, county, and  
11 State governments; and

12           WHEREAS, He was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity,  
13 Inc., the Optometric Extension Program (OEP), the Illinois  
14 Optometric Association (IOA), the American Optometric  
15 Association (AOA), the National Optometric Association (NOA),  
16 and the College of Vision Development (COVD); and

17           WHEREAS, Because of his expertise in the area of vision, he  
18 served as a consultant to the Woodlawn Experimental School  
19 Project and the Chicago Board of Education Area A School Mental  
20 Health Project to Advance Creativity in Education; he served as  
21 a consultant for "Project Healthy" which evaluated the  
22 effectiveness of the Headstart Program; he served as a  
23 consultant for the U.S. Postal Service to establish vision

1 standards of certain job categories; and he was the first  
2 African-American to receive a fellowship in the College of  
3 Vision Development (COVD); and

4 WHEREAS, He organized an associate degree program for  
5 training of optometric technicians that graduated some of the  
6 first minority technicians in the field; and

7 WHEREAS, Dr. Johnson was a faithful member of Mt. Calvary  
8 Missionary Baptist Church, located on Chicago's Southside,  
9 where he served many years as Chairman of the Trustee Board  
10 until his death; and

11 WHEREAS, Because of his unselfish contributions to  
12 individuals and groups in all walks of life, he received many  
13 accolades from professional, civic, educational, and religious  
14 organizations; and

15 WHEREAS, Dr. Robert L. Johnson was preceded in death by his  
16 daughter Carol (husband, Larry) Fitzgerald; and

17 WHEREAS, The passing of Dr. Robert L. Johnson will be felt  
18 by all who knew and loved him, especially his wife of 58 years,  
19 Mercedes; his children, Valerie (husband, Norman, Sr.) Thomas;  
20 Stephanie (husband, Perry) Brown; Robert, Jr.; Kimberly  
21 (husband, Byron) Henry; and Paula (husband, Samuel II) Jones;

1 he also leaves ten grandchildren to mourn his passing, Larry  
2 Jr., Crystal, Marcus, Samuel III, Robert, Candice, Norman,  
3 Jasmine, Gabrielle, and Kyle; and two great-grandchildren,  
4 Devin and Jaylen; his siblings, Joerean (husband, Walter,  
5 deceased) Mills; Samuel (wife, Susie, deceased) Johnson; Joe L.  
6 Johnson; and Doris Kennebrew; and many other relatives and  
7 special friends; therefore, be it

8       RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL  
9 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn, along with  
10 his family and friends, the passing of Robert L. Johnson, Sr.;  
11 and be it further

12       RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
13 presented to the family of Dr. Robert L. Johnson, Sr., as a  
14 symbol of our sincere sympathy.