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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 Raymond Eugene "Gene" Suggs of Champaign, who passed away on September 19, 2014; and

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WHEREAS, Gene Suggs was born on May 22, 1928 in Champaign to Roy Raymond and Claudia Mae (nee Glover) Suggs; he attended Marquette Elementary School and Champaign Junior High and High Schools, graduating in 1946; he attended Illinois State University in Normal; he was active in his community as a Boy Scout and Patrol Leader in Troop 11; in 1945, he was elected by his teammates as captain of the Champaign High School Maroons football team; he was a member of the Champaign High School basketball team that won the 1946 Illinois State championship, and, in 1990, the team was entered into the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame; he married Hester Barbara Nelson in Champaign on June 20, 1948; and

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WHEREAS, Gene Suggs, as a young man of 16, worked with his uncle, Eddie Glover, in the roundhouse of the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis Railway as a fire knocker; in the early 1950s, he began Suggs Plastering and Contracting and operated the business for over 25 years; he also worked with Reinhardt and Johnson Realtors as an associate; and

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1           WHEREAS, Gene Suggs's interest in photography began as a  
2 hobby in the 1940s and blossomed into a lifetime career that  
3 spanned over 50 years; starting out as a freelance  
4 photographer, his work drew positive attention and he was hired  
5 by the Champaign-Urbana Courier as a part-time general  
6 assignment photographer in 1960, working there until the  
7 publication closed in 1979; he continued his work as a  
8 photographer, establishing Suggs Photography; over the years,  
9 he documented the visual history of organizations, clubs,  
10 sporting events, weddings, and other social activities  
11 throughout Champaign County and, most particularly, its  
12 African-American community; his photos appeared in several  
13 publications, including Ebony Magazine; and

14           WHEREAS, In the early 1960s, Gene Suggs was part of a group  
15 of individuals committed to improving race relations and the  
16 quality of life for the African-American population in the  
17 community, which resulted in the founding of the Champaign  
18 County Urban League; he would go on to serve on its Board of  
19 Directors and as its President for several years; he also  
20 served on the boards of the Community Foundation of Champaign  
21 County, The Don Moyers Boys' Club, and was a member of the  
22 Zoning Board of Appeals for the City of Champaign; for over 30  
23 years, he served as a jury commissioner for Champaign County;  
24 and

1           WHEREAS, Gene Suggs was life-long member of Bethel African  
2 Methodist Episcopal Church, serving in the past on its Board of  
3 Trustees and chairing the Building Committee for the current  
4 church, completed in 1959; he was a devoted fan of University  
5 of Illinois basketball and a founding member of the Illini  
6 Rebounders, serving as its Vice-President from 1989 to 1992; he  
7 was also a member at one time of the Champaign-Urbana Kiwanis  
8 Club and the Thursday Evening Men's Supper Club; and

9           WHEREAS, Gene Suggs was preceded in death by his parents;  
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11           WHEREAS, Gene Suggs is survived by his wife, Hester;  
12 daughter, Barbara Elaine (Frederick) Mason; son, Danny Jerome  
13 (Catherine); daughter, Ramona Gay (William) Winrow; 7  
14 grandsons, William Winrow III, Mason James Reinhart-Suggs,  
15 Justin Paul Winrow, Raymond Nelson Winrow, Frederick Eugene  
16 Kwame Mason, Ryan Daniel Suggs, and Logan Patrick Suggs;  
17 cousins, Marian Barnett Cullers and her sons, Vincent Terry  
18 Cullers and Jeffery Bryan Cullers; sisters-in-law, Eleanor  
19 Conrad, Estelle Merrifield, and Eunice Rivers; and a host of  
20 nieces and nephews, cousins, and friends; therefore, be it

21           RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL  
22 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of  
23 Raymond Eugene "Gene" Suggs, and extend our sincere condolences

1 to his family, friends, and all who knew and loved him; and be  
2 it further

3 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
4 presented to the family of Gene Suggs as an expression of our  
5 deepest sympathy.