



HR1070

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of James "Major" Adams; and

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WHEREAS, James Adams was born on January 5, 1922 and was raised on the west side of Chicago in what was then called Maxwell Street; he graduated from Crane High School in 1939 and at the time of his death was the school's oldest living alumni; and

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WHEREAS, After serving a tour in Europe during World War II and working for various agencies, including Jane Addams Hull House, James Adams moved into the Henry Horner Housing Development in 1955, where he immediately began to provide gang intervention and prevention programs as a volunteer and later as an employee of the Henry Horner Boys and Girls Club; due in part to his efforts, the Henry Horner Boys and Girls Club was the first Boys Club built in a housing development in the United States; he, along other community residents, created a drill team which later became the Hornets Drum and Bugle Corps, a nationally-renowned 120 member paramilitary-style band composed of young people and troubled youth ages 14 to 21; and

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WHEREAS, From 1959 through 1962, James Adams, with the

1 assistance of the Chicago Area Project, established and
2 developed the Youth Services Committee of the Westside, a
3 grassroots voluntary community-based organization which
4 addressed the rising juvenile delinquency cases in the
5 neighborhood; along with other volunteer parents and leaders,
6 he provided direct services and advocated on behalf of the
7 youth and families with schools, courts, the Chicago Police
8 Department, and other institutions; he also initiated
9 community organizing and development efforts aimed at
10 improving the quality of life for neighborhood residents; and

11 WHEREAS, During his work with the youth in the community,
12 James Adams would often be visited by former residents that had
13 recently been released from prison, many of them having no idea
14 of how to get back on their feet; for many, the first stop
15 after being released would be the Boy's Club to see "Major";
16 with very few resources available, he created the community's
17 first re-entry program for ex-felons; he recruited the
18 Salvation Army to provide daily breakfast and lunches and the
19 Mile Square Health Center and Bobby E. Wright Comprehensive
20 Behavioral Health Center to provide medical services; during
21 the 1970s and 1980s, he assisted the leadership of Malcolm X
22 College in recruiting and increasing student enrollment,
23 developing the community college music program, and promoting
24 summer youth sport and academic initiatives; he also led the
25 Malcolm X College Kwanzaa program for youth residing in the

1 Henry Horner Homes from 1993 to 1996 and was awarded the Shule
2 Ya Watolo Service Award in 1996; and

3 WHEREAS, James Adams worked with local businesses,
4 including Rush University, to provide job opportunities; he
5 created the original Midnight Basketball program to keep young
6 men off the streets during prime crime spree hours; his
7 counseling and mentoring aided in reducing the rate of
8 recidivism; his pioneering work with Nancy Jefferson and
9 Congressman Danny Davis also led to many programs assisting
10 ex-felons; and

11 WHEREAS, James Adams' work has influenced many notable
12 individuals, such as Warner Saunders (NBC 5 news anchor),
13 Reginald "Hats" Adams, Maurice and Verdine White (Earth, Wind,
14 and Fire), Dr. Steven Parker, Dr. Vaughn Tatum, Sonny Lumpkin
15 (City College Chancellor), Cheryl Hyman, Howard Lathan, Boyse
16 Edwards, Keith Jackson, Arthur Robertson (founder of the South
17 Shore Drill Team), Bill Freeman, and many other notable
18 leaders; and

19 WHEREAS, James Adams was a recipient of numerous awards and
20 accolades, including the 1998 National Jefferson
21 Award/Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Public Service Award, the
22 2012 President's Volunteer Services Awards, and the 2013
23 Governor's Volunteer Award; his work will also continue through

1 the agency he founded in 1996, the Major Adams Community
2 Committee, which will keep alive his vision of "Empowering
3 Youth and Families"; and

4 WHEREAS, James Adams served as a model of hard work,
5 integrity, and dedication for the people of the State of
6 Illinois; therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
8 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
9 we, along with his family and friends, mourn the passing of
10 James "Major" Adams; and be it further

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