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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, James Robert Thompson Jr., the 37th Governor of Illinois, was born on May 8, 1936 in Chicago; as a child and young adult, he pursued an education in the American Midwest, taking college courses at the University of Illinois at Chicago (Navy Pier) and graduating from Washington University in St. Louis; and

8

WHEREAS, As an aspiring lawyer, Gov. Jim Thompson studied at Northwestern University's School of Law, earning his Juris Doctor degree in 1959; he was subsequently admitted to the Illinois bar and began pursuing a lifelong legal career; and

12

WHEREAS, Gov. Jim Thompson began his legal career as a practitioner in public service, earning experience in the office of the Cook County State's Attorney, where as a 26-year-old lawyer, he argued the landmark case of Escobedo v. Illinois in the United States Supreme Court; after several years as an associate professor at the Northwestern University School of Law, he joined the office of the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois as First Assistant U.S. Attorney; during this time, he authored several textbooks on criminal law and procedure; and

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WHEREAS, In 1971, Gov. Jim Thompson was appointed by

1 President Richard Nixon to serve as the United States Attorney
2 for the Northern District of Illinois, which encompasses all of
3 metropolitan Chicago; and

4 WHEREAS, As the U.S. Attorney with responsibility for
5 prosecuting federal offenses committed in the greater Chicago
6 area, Gov. Jim Thompson became legendary among his fellow
7 federal prosecutors and among the citizens of Illinois for his
8 aggressive pursuit of criminals in both organized and white
9 collar crimes; and

10 WHEREAS, During his time as a U.S. Attorney, Gov. Jim
11 Thompson and his office won a string of convictions, with
12 targets ranging from organized criminal figures involved in
13 illegal drug distribution to corrupt elected public officials,
14 including a high-profile conviction of federal judge Otto
15 Kerner, a former governor; and

16 WHEREAS, In November of 1976, Gov. Jim Thompson ran as a
17 member of the Republican Party on a "War on Crime" platform; he
18 won the office of Governor of Illinois with a landslide margin
19 of more than 1.3 million votes from his fellow Illinoisans; and

20 WHEREAS, In pursuit of one of the principal planks of his
21 election platform, Gov. Jim Thompson worked with the law
22 enforcement community and with the Illinois General Assembly to

1 develop comprehensive amendatory language within the Criminal
2 Code of 1961, with a focus on illegal drug distribution and
3 violent criminal offenses; and

4 WHEREAS, A key feature of the rewritten Criminal Code added
5 a new classification of punishment, the Class X felony, for
6 which a variety of serious offenders could be sentenced to
7 serve terms of from six to 30 years in a State correctional
8 center; and

9 WHEREAS, Due to a quirk in the then-new Illinois
10 Constitution of 1970, the term of office to which Gov. Jim
11 Thompson had been elected in November of 1976 was only two
12 years long; he ran for re-election in 1978, winning by almost
13 600,000 votes; and

14 WHEREAS, In his second term, Gov. Jim Thompson faced the
15 worldwide inflationary spiral and energy crisis of 1979-80; as
16 challenges grew, he built alliances downstate, including the
17 selection of sites for new State correctional centers to be
18 built to house the rapidly increasing number of inmates that
19 were the result of the new Class X felony law; and

20 WHEREAS, In his closest elective contest in 1982, Gov. Jim
21 Thompson was elected to his third term by a margin of 5,074
22 votes, less than one vote per precinct; the same election saw

1 the Democratic Party win large margins in the Illinois House of
2 Representatives and the Illinois Senate, which they would enjoy
3 for the rest of his time in office; and

4 WHEREAS, As a third-term Republican governor facing
5 Democratic legislative majorities, Gov. Jim Thompson turned to
6 the deal-making for which he is remembered; in 1985, he
7 developed and worked with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle
8 to enact Build Illinois, the statewide infrastructure program;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Gov. Jim Thompson demanded that all citizens of
11 Illinois be included in the progress of this great State; this
12 included the expansion of interstate highways to previously
13 underserved areas of Illinois, as well as securing the Illinois
14 State Fair and the DuQuoin State Fair, where he is still
15 remembered fondly; and

16 WHEREAS, Gov. Jim Thompson brought his love of art and
17 history to office with him, making cultural preservation a part
18 of state government, including the establishment of the
19 Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, requiring that all
20 state building construction include budgets for art, and
21 personally orchestrating the purchase of the Dana-Thomas house
22 in Springfield, a Frank Lloyd Wright masterpiece now enjoyed by
23 people from Illinois and around the world; and

1 WHEREAS, Running on a platform that included continuance of
2 Build Illinois initiatives, Gov. Jim Thompson sought election
3 to his fourth and final term, winning in November of 1986 by a
4 landslide margin of almost 400,000 votes; and

5 WHEREAS, Gov. Jim Thompson chose not to seek re-election in
6 November of 1990, retiring from the Governor's Mansion after
7 four terms that spanned 14 years in office, the longest period
8 of time enjoyed as governor by any individual up to that date,
9 or at any time since; and

10 WHEREAS, Gov. Jim Thompson was a loyal Republican, always
11 responsive to the members of his own party who requested his
12 assistance, but also was willing and eager to negotiate and
13 compromise with Democratic leaders, who controlled one or both
14 houses of the Illinois General Assembly during much of the time
15 of his governorship; and

16 WHEREAS, After leaving office as governor in January of
17 1991 and returning to the private sector, Gov. Jim Thompson
18 once again took up the active practice of law, joining the
19 international firm of Winston & Strawn as CEO and building a
20 network of legal professionals that would, by the time of his
21 retirement from that firm, span the globe; and

1 WHEREAS, In addition to his work with Winston & Strawn,
2 Gov. Jim Thompson was appointed to a series of positions that
3 reflected his standing in the highest ranks of American private
4 citizens; in 1990, he was appointed by President George H.W.
5 Bush to chair the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, the
6 panel that protects independent oversight over the national
7 security/intelligence organs of the United States, serving in
8 this role until 1993; and

9 WHEREAS, In 2002, Gov. Jim Thompson was appointed to serve
10 on the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United
11 States, commonly known as the 9/11 Commission, to examine and
12 report on U.S. preparedness for the events of 9/11/01; he
13 helped draft the commission's report, of which the public
14 portion was completed and released in 2004; and

15 WHEREAS, Gov. Jim Thompson is best remembered as a loyal
16 friend and peerless mentor; in his professional life, his
17 proudest moments were watching the myriad successes of his
18 protegees; as a prosecutor, governor, and an attorney in the
19 private sector, he fostered the careers of countless women and
20 men who have moved to the highest ranks in their profession; as
21 governor, he sought out the highest levels of talent and
22 selected for promotion a list of public servants that includes
23 his successor Jim Edgar, the 38th Governor of Illinois; and

1 WHEREAS, Gov. Jim Thompson was happiest with his beloved
2 family, including his wife of 44 years, Jayne Carr Thompson,
3 and his daughter, Samantha; in later years, he was often found
4 babysitting his granddaughter, Persephone, who was the light of
5 his life; and

6 WHEREAS, As a politician, a public servant, a lawyer, and a
7 senior legal executive, Gov. Jim Thompson was noted for his
8 gregarious personality; his larger than life persona enabled
9 him to convey an effortless atmosphere of power and dignity;
10 even when sliding down the giant slide at the Illinois State
11 Fairgrounds, his joyous embrace of the governorship endeared
12 him to citizens from all over the State of Illinois; therefore,
13 be it

14 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
15 HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
16 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we mourn the death of James R.
17 Thompson, elected four times as Governor of Illinois, the
18 longest period of time enjoyed by any Illinoisan in our State's
19 highest office; and be it further

20 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
21 presented to Gov. Jim Thompson's widow, Jayne Carr Thompson,
22 and to his daughter, Samantha, his son-in-law, Anastasios
23 Thomazos, and his granddaughter, Persephone.