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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 B. Burns, who passed away on December 10, 2020; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Burns' legacy of honesty, fairness, and transparency leaves an indelible mark on the State of Illinois; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Burns was appointed Secretary of State Inspector General by Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White in April 2000 as the office had been under a cloud of controversy and corruption prior to White's election; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Burns, upon taking office, expanded the size of the Inspector General's office, hiring professional investigators from a variety of law enforcement backgrounds; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Burns successfully initiated legislation that made the position of Secretary of State Inspector General permanent and broadened its powers to find and remove corruption; and

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WHEREAS, Jim Burns' successful legislation mandated that

1 the Secretary of State appoint, with the advice and consent of
2 the Illinois Senate, a qualified Inspector General for the
3 purpose of detection and deterrence and prevention of fraud,
4 waste, mismanagement, and misconduct; and

5 WHEREAS, Jim Burns' legislative efforts provided the
6 Inspector General's office with subpoena powers, strong
7 whistleblower protections, audit authority, and protected
8 positions for Inspector General staff; and

9 WHEREAS, Jim Burns implemented several
10 corruption-combating initiatives, including an Audit Review
11 Committee to provide a proactive element to evaluate all audit
12 reports and improve systems and programs within the Secretary
13 of State's office, a hotline and the website ReportItNow.net
14 that allow the public or employees to file complaints, and an
15 office-wide newsletter to communicate announcements with rank
16 and file employees; and

17 WHEREAS, Jim Burns instituted a computer-based case
18 management system to improve efficiency in day-to-day
19 operations of the Secretary of State's office, as well as to
20 provide law enforcement with a means of tracking suspicious
21 conduct patterns; and

22 WHEREAS, Jim Burns worked to strengthen the relationship

1 between the Illinois Secretary of State's office and outside
2 law enforcement agencies, including U.S. Attorney's offices;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Jim Burns made it his mission to visit Secretary
5 of State Driver Services facilities statewide in an ongoing
6 effort to foster a transparent and accessible relationship
7 between the Inspector General's office and facility employees;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, Jim Burns worked tirelessly in his role as
10 Inspector General to help restore integrity and eliminate all
11 forms of institutionalized wrongdoing in the Illinois
12 Secretary of State's office; and

13 WHEREAS, Jim Burns served as a strong, visible, and
14 independent Inspector General for more than 20 years, which
15 resulted in restoring the public trust and changing the
16 culture of the Illinois Secretary of State's office; and

17 WHEREAS, Jim Burns was appointed by President Bill Clinton
18 in 1993, at the recommendation of U.S. Senator Paul Simon, as
19 U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, a post he
20 held until 1997; and

21 WHEREAS, Jim Burns, as U.S. Attorney for the Northern

1 District of Illinois, managed an office of 250 staff members,
2 including 130 federal prosecutors; and

3 WHEREAS, Jim Burns, as U.S. Attorney for the Northern
4 District of Illinois, prosecuted violent street gangs, public
5 corruption, international drug smugglers, organized crime,
6 white-collar financial fraud, environmental and civil rights
7 violations, government contract fraud, and health care and
8 insurance fraud; and

9 WHEREAS, Jim Burns, prior to his appointment as U.S.
10 Attorney for the Northern District, worked in private practice
11 in Chicago, where he specialized in civil litigation,
12 regulatory matters, sensitive investigations, and white-collar
13 criminal defense; and

14 WHEREAS, Jim Burns was a fellow in the American College of
15 Trial Lawyers; and

16 WHEREAS, Jim Burns served as an assistant U.S. Attorney
17 from 1971 to 1978, during which time he tried dozens of cases
18 as a federal prosecutor, eventually attaining the position of
19 Chief of the Criminal Litigation Division; and

20 WHEREAS, Jim Burns played one year of professional
21 basketball; and

1 WHEREAS, Jim Burns earned both his Bachelor of Arts in
2 History in 1967 and his law degree in 1971 from Northwestern
3 University; and

4 WHEREAS, Jim Burns was an All-American and Academic
5 All-American basketball player; and

6 WHEREAS, Jim Burns was long active in the academic,
7 athletic, and alumni affairs of Northwestern University and
8 served on the Board of Trustees and the Visiting Committee of
9 the School of Law; and

10 WHEREAS, Jim Burns received the Northwestern Alumni
11 Association's Service Award and the Northwestern University's
12 Law School Alumni Merit Award; and

13 WHEREAS, Jim Burns was selected in 1992 for the Silver
14 Anniversary All-American Team by the National Association of
15 Basketball Coaches, based on his outstanding basketball and
16 career achievements; and

17 WHEREAS, Jim Burns led McLeansboro High School to fourth
18 place in the state basketball tournament; and

19 WHEREAS, Jim Burns was born in Quincy and raised in

1 McLeansboro; he resided in Evanston for much of his adulthood
2 and was a resident of Wilmette at the time of his death; and

3 WHEREAS, Jim Burns is survived by his beloved wife, Marty;
4 his three children who filled him with pride, Camille,
5 Heather, and Jim; and a grandson who he loved and adored,
6 Jaany; therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
8 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
9 we mourn the passing of Jim Burns and extend our sincere
10 condolences to his family, his friends, his many coworkers,
11 including Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, and all who
12 knew and loved him; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
14 presented to the family of Jim Burns as an expression of our
15 deepest sympathy.