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HOUSE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The members of the House of Representatives of the State of Illinois are pleased to recognize milestone events in the history of congregations in the State; and

WHEREAS, It has come to our attention that Temple B'nai Israel of Aurora will be celebrating its centennial during the year 2004; and

WHEREAS, In the late 19th and early 20th century, a number of Eastern European Jews arrived in the Aurora area as part of the second great European emigration; by 1904, about 20 Jewish families had settled in Aurora; and

WHEREAS, The beginnings of organized worship were relatively informal; a local business man, Barnett Yellin, led the services and taught the children in religious school; the early congregants informally took on the name "Sons of Abraham" and prayed in various rented halls that were above the businesses in downtown Aurora; by 1916, the group was more formally organized and charged minimal dues; from time to time, rabbis came from Chicago to lead services, especially for the High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; and

WHEREAS, The first full-time rabbi, Nathan Rubenstein, was engaged in the early 1920s; around that time, the congregants chose a new name, Young Men's Hebrew Association of Aurora (YMHA); this unusual name was said to reflect the congregants' feelings that they were more than a congregation; they were a community representing one of the most unusual Jewish communities in the United States because they represented every aspect, both religious and cultural; and

WHEREAS, In 1923, a State charter was granted to the YMHA; officers and a board of directors were selected and immediately

1 began to plan for a permanent house of worship; the
2 congregation's building, the YMHA Temple, was completed in
3 1927; it still stands on North Lincoln Avenue on the edge of
4 downtown Aurora; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1961, the congregation moved to its present
6 site, located at 400 North Edgelawn in Aurora; the building
7 provides a sanctuary seating 200, a small chapel that
8 accommodates 50, a full set of classrooms for religious
9 education, and a large social hall that can be converted to an
10 addition to the sanctuary to accommodate additional
11 congregants, especially during High Holy Days; and

12 WHEREAS, During the previous year, coincident with the move
13 to the present location, the group changed its name to Temple
14 B'nai Israel; at that time, membership comprised about 130 to
15 140 families, with almost all living in Aurora; and

16 WHEREAS, A number of rabbis have served the congregation
17 over the 100 year period and some went on to distinguished
18 national careers; notably, Rabbi Hyman Agress served for 35
19 years, from 1963 to 1998; since 2001, Rabbi Shmuel Mann has led
20 the congregation; the group is governed by a board of directors
21 and a board of trustees; the current president is Esther
22 Pollock; therefore, be it

23 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
24 NINETY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
25 congratulate Temple B'nai Israel on the occasion of its
26 centennial; and be it further

27 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
28 presented to Temple B'nai Israel as an expression of our
29 respect and esteem and with best wishes for the congregation's
30 continued success.