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SENATE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The members of the Senate of the State of Illinois learned with great sorrow of the death of Vernon Jarrett on Sunday, May 23, 2004; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett was a leading African-American journalist whose reports and columns appeared in the Chicago Sun-Times, the Chicago Tribune, and the Chicago Daily Defender; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett was born in Paris, Tennessee, to two schoolteachers whose parents were former slaves; he graduated from Knoxville (Tennessee) College; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett covered a race riot on his first day as a reporter for the Chicago Defender in 1946, and was delighted to see his byline appear alongside those of the activist W.E.B. DuBois and poet Langston Hughes; from 1948 to 1951, Mr. Jarrett and composer Oscar Brown Jr. produced "Negro Newsfront", the nation's first daily radio broadcast created by African Americans; he also worked for the Associated Negro Press; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett became the Chicago Tribune's first African-American columnist in 1970; he used his editorial voice as a forum for commentary on the social and economic trends affecting African Americans and the global concerns of pan-African politics; in 1983, he took his column to the Chicago Sun-Times, where he served on the editorial board and worked until 1994; he was known to be a distinctive voice, not only for the African-American community, but for all of Chicago; in his position as a columnist for the Sun-Times, he was a mentor to any reporter who sought his counsel; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett produced nearly 2,000 broadcasts on

1 WLS-Channel 7; he was a founder of the National Association of
2 Black Journalists and served as its president from 1977 to
3 1979; he was current president of the group's Chicago chapter;
4 also in 1977, he created the NAACP-sponsored ACT-SO program, or
5 Academic, Cultural, Technological, and Scientific Olympics;
6 ACT-SO has awarded more than \$1,000,000 in scholarships,
7 computers, and books to thousands of students; he also served
8 as a member of the editorial board of the NAACP's 90-year-old
9 Crisis Magazine; in addition, he was a senior fellow at the
10 University of Illinois at Chicago and taught history and
11 journalism at other colleges; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1998, Mr. Jarrett was inducted into the
13 National Literary Hall of Fame at the University of Chicago's
14 Gwendolyn Brooks Center; the National Academy of Television
15 Arts and Sciences awarded him its Silver Circle Award,
16 recognizing his 30 years of contributions to the medium; he was
17 honored with the first NAACP James Weldon Johnson Achievement
18 Award; and

19 WHEREAS, In recent years, Mr. Jarrett was a columnist for
20 the New York Times' New American News Syndicate and his social
21 commentary was heard during "The Jarrett Journal", a news
22 broadcast on WVON-AM, Chicago's only African-American owned
23 radio station; and

24 WHEREAS, Mr. Jarrett had a passion for writing, was an avid
25 reader, especially of history, and was a chronicler of black
26 politics nationwide; and

27 WHEREAS, The passing of Vernon Jarrett has been deeply felt
28 by many especially his wife, Fernetta; his son, Thomas; and his
29 three grandchildren; therefore, be it

30 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-THIRD GENERAL
31 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of

1 Vernon Jarrett, a pioneer for African-American journalists who
2 demonstrated the highest ideals of journalism and community
3 responsibility; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
5 presented to the family of Vernon Jarrett as an expression of
6 our sincerest condolences during their time of bereavement.