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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Senate of the State of Illinois learned with sadness of the death of George Mikan, the original "Mr. Basketball", of Arizona and formerly of Joliet, on June 1, 2005; and

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WHEREAS, Mr. Mikan was born June 18, 1924, in Joliet; he attended Joliet Catholic High School in Joliet, Quigley Preparatory Seminary School in Chicago, and graduated from DePaul University; he started studies to be a priest and was an accomplished classical pianist; he was told he could never play basketball because he wore glasses, but he persisted and proved everyone wrong; and

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WHEREAS, George Mikan, a 6-foot-10 giant of a man who played basketball with superior coordination and a fierce competitive spirit, was one of the prototypes for the dominating tall players of later decades; and

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WHEREAS, During George Mikan's college days at DePaul, he revolutionized the game; he, along with fellow Hall of Famer Bob Kurland, swatted away so many shots that in 1944 the NCAA introduced a rule that prohibited goaltending; and

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WHEREAS, He was a three-time All-America (1944, 1945, 1946) and led the nation in scoring in 1945 and 1946; his 120 points in three games led DePaul to the 1945 NIT championship; he scored 1,870 points at DePaul and once tallied 53 against Rhode Island State, a remarkable feat considering he single-handedly outscored the entire Rhode Island State team; and

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WHEREAS, In 1950, he was voted the greatest player in the first half of the century by the Associated Press; he won his first professional championship with the Chicago American Gears of the NBL in 1947 and captured six more pro titles (1

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1 NBL-1948, 1 BAA-1949, and 4 NBA-1950, 1952-54); as the
2 cornerstone of the Minneapolis Lakers, he led the NBA in
3 scoring three times (1949-52), played in the first four NBA
4 All-Star Games (MVP 1953), and led the league in rebounding
5 twice (1952, 1953); and

6 WHEREAS, Towering over most of his competitors, he was one
7 of the most effective scorers of his day, averaging 22.6 points
8 over a professional career that lasted nine years - one with
9 the Chicago American Gears and eight with the Minneapolis
10 Lakers; and

11 WHEREAS, He announced his retirement after the Lakers' 1954
12 championship run and devoted all his energies to his law career
13 and to raising his large family; while practicing corporate and
14 real estate law, he also bought and renovated buildings in
15 Minneapolis; he was in the first class elected to the Naismith
16 Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1959; in 1967, he returned
17 to the basketball world to become the first commissioner of the
18 American Basketball Association (ABA); faced with all the
19 problems of trying to create and sustain a fledgling
20 professional sports organization, he came up with the novel
21 idea of the league's multicolored basketball; and

22 WHEREAS, He served as ABA commissioner until 1969; he
23 resurfaced in the mid-1980s as the head of a task force whose
24 goal was to bring professional basketball back to Minneapolis;
25 with the financial backing of local businessmen, he
26 successfully lobbied the NBA to add an expansion team in
27 Minnesota for the 1989-90 season; the team became the Minnesota
28 Timberwolves; one of the most dominant players ever to play the
29 game, George Mikan's contributions to the sport and his impact
30 on the NBA still loom as large as his 6-10 frame; his
31 accomplishments were further acknowledged when he was named a
32 member of the NBA 50th Anniversary All-Time Team in 1996; and

1 WHEREAS, The passing of George Mikan is felt by all who
2 knew and loved him, especially his wife of 58 years, Patricia;
3 his children, G. Larry Mikan, Terry (Karen) Mikan, Patrick
4 Mikan, Michael (Karla) Mikan, Tricia (Doug) Johnson, and
5 Maureen Mikan; and his grandchildren, Gina, Molly Marysa,
6 Shannon, Max, Jenna, Kristin, and Keara Mikan and Christine and
7 Danny Johnson; and

8 WHEREAS, While one of the most outstanding athletes in
9 history, George Mikan will be remembered for his big smile,
10 positive attitude, and competitive spirit; he was a major role
11 model for all the young people who grew up watching him
12 dominate his sport while still being a kind, thoughtful, clean
13 living citizen; therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FOURTH GENERAL
15 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
16 George Mikan and extend our sincerest condolences to his family
17 and friends; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
19 presented to his family as an expression of our deepest
20 sympathy.