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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, State Representative Monique D. Davis and the members of the Illinois House of Representatives and the Illinois Senate are pleased to welcome Vernice Armour as she speaks in honor of Women's History Month; and

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WHEREAS, She was born in Chicago in 1973 and grew up in Memphis, Tennessee; in 1991, she graduated from John Overton High School for Creative and Performing Arts, where she was very active in the music program, class Vice President, and a member of Mu Alpha Theta (the mathematics honor society) and The National Honor Society; and

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WHEREAS, Vernice marched in the military boot steps of both her dad, Clarence Jackson, a former Marine, who married Vernice's mother, Authurine, and her father, Gaston C. Armour Jr. of Chicago, a retired major in the U.S. Army Reserves; in 1993, the future combat pilot enlisted in the Army Reserves and a few months later joined the Army ROTC program while enrolled at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU); during an Army ROTC career day, the seed of becoming a pilot was planted when Vernice saw the image of a young black female in an Army flight suit; "Now why didn't I think of that," was her first thought; from this experience, Vernice knows the power of an "image" and a positive role model; and

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1 WHEREAS, In June of 1996, after a brief stint as a
2 Nashville Sheriff's Department Correction Officer, Vernice
3 took additional time off from college to accept an invitation
4 to the Nashville Police Academy and graduated as a police
5 officer in December 1996; Vernice was the second woman and
6 first African American woman on the Nashville Police
7 Department's motorcycle squad; and

8 WHEREAS, She graduated from MTSU in December of 1997 with
9 her B.S. in Physical Education: Emphasis in Exercise Science;
10 in 1998 Vernice was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the
11 Marine Corps on December 12, 1998 and on her way to flight
12 school; and

13 WHEREAS, When Vernice earned her wings in July 2001, the
14 ambitious pilot ranked No. 1 out her class of 12 and of the
15 last 200 to graduate from flight school; as the top graduate,
16 she made the Naval Air Station's prestigious Commodore's List,
17 received the Academic Achievement Award, and subsequently made
18 history as the Marine Corps' first African-American female
19 pilot; and

20 WHEREAS, After flight school, Vernice was stationed at
21 Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton near San Diego, California,
22 and honed her skills piloting the famed AH-1 W Super Cobra; she

1 was named Camp Pendleton's 2001 Female Athlete of the Year,
2 two-time titleholder in Camp Pendleton's annual Strongest
3 Warrior Competition, and was a running back for the San Diego
4 Sunfire women's professional football team; and

5 WHEREAS, One of the few and the proud, during the start of
6 the war in March 2003, United States Marine Corps captain
7 Armour was one of 1,500 female Marines in the Persian Gulf
8 fighting to dismantle the regime of Saddam Hussein in Operation
9 Iraqi Freedom; during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Vernice flew
10 above the deserts of Iraq in her missile-equipped attack
11 helicopter, engaging the enemy and scouting the roads from her
12 cockpit, making sure they were safe for her fellow Marines and
13 soldiers on the ground; she has completed 2 combat tours of
14 duty in the Gulf; and

15 WHEREAS, With her departure out of the Marine Corps in June
16 2007, Vernice continues to pursue her passions as an author,
17 professional speaker, and trainer; addressing professional
18 organizations, businesses, and schools, she emphasizes
19 leadership, pursuing your passion in life, education, and
20 taking positive steps to reach goals; therefore, be it

21 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
22 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
23 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we congratulate Vernice Armour

1 for her many accomplishments and thank her for speaking to the
2 Illinois House of Representatives; and be it further

3 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
4 presented to Vernice Armour as a symbol of our respect and
5 esteem.