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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are pleased to honor Nickolas Ashford and
4 Valerie Simpson for their many years of success as the musical
5 duo Ashford & Simpson; and

6 WHEREAS, Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson's
7 award-winning collaborations began in 1964, when the duo
8 recorded an original song, "I'll Find You", as "Valerie &
9 Nick"; the two met earlier that year in New York at the White
10 Rock Baptist Church after Mr. Ashford moved to New York from
11 Detroit in pursuit of a theater career; being homeless upon his
12 arrival, he happened upon Bronx native Valerie Simpson, who had
13 studied piano since the age of five and was playing and singing
14 with the Harlem church's legendary choir; Mr. Ashford joined
15 the choir and the two began writing songs, selling their first
16 batch for \$75; and

17 WHEREAS, Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson were soon signed
18 to the legendary Scepter Records as staff songwriters, breaking
19 through in 1966 when Ray Charles landed a major hit with their
20 composition "Let's Go Get Stoned"; their success led to both of
21 them being signed with Motown Records, where they penned the
22 classic Marvin Gaye/Tammi Terrell hits "Ain't No Mountain High
23 Enough", "Your Precious Love", "Ain't Nothing Like the Real

1 Thing", "You're All I Need to Get By", and "Good Lovin' Ain't
2 Easy to Come By"; they also wrote hits for other Motown greats,
3 most notably Diana Ross, who launched her solo career with a
4 hit remake of "Ain't No Mountain High Enough", that was also
5 produced by Ashford & Simpson; the two also wrote hits such as
6 "Reach Out and Touch (Somebody's Hand)" and "The Boss"; and

7 WHEREAS, Not content with simply writing hit songs, Nick
8 Ashford and Valerie Simpson had their own recording/performing
9 aspirations as well; from 1973 to 1981, they released nine
10 albums, creating hit songs such as "Send It", "Don't Cost You
11 Nothin'", "It Seems to Hang On", "Love Don't Make it Right",
12 "Is It Still Good to Ya", and "Found a Cure"; their hitmaking
13 continued after a move to Capitol Records in 1982, with "Street
14 Corner", "Highrise", "I'll Be There for You", and "Solid",
15 which topped the R&B chart in 1984 and crossed over to number
16 12 on the pop singles chart; during their successful career,
17 the two continued writing and producing songs for other
18 artists, including Ben E. King, Gladys Knight and the Pips,
19 Chaka Khan, and Quincy Jones; and

20 WHEREAS, Ashford & Simpson were the only R&B act to perform
21 at the historic Live Aid event in 1985, where they brought out
22 Teddy Pendergrass to join in on "Reach Out and Touch
23 (Somebody's Hand)" in Mr. Pendergrass' first performance
24 following his tragic car accident; the duo later starred in

1 concerts celebrating Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday and
2 President Bill Clinton's first inauguration; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1996, the duo's "Reach Out and Touch
4 (Somebody's Hand)" was used as the theme for the Summer
5 Olympics in Atlanta; in that same year, they formed their own
6 label, Hopsack & Silk, and released "Been Found", an acclaimed
7 music/poetry album collaboration with their friend, Maya
8 Angelou; also in that year, the American Society of Composers
9 And Publishers (ASCAP) presented them with its highest honor,
10 the Founder's Award; in 1999, they received the Pioneer Award
11 from the prestigious Rhythm & Blues Foundation; in 2002, they
12 joined the pantheon of popular music songwriters when they were
13 inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame; and

14 WHEREAS, The partnership between Nick Ashford and Valerie
15 Simpson is currently hotter than ever; a two week stint at
16 Feinstein's at the Regency in New York in 2006 was so
17 successful that they were brought back for three weeks in 2007,
18 garnering some of the best notices of their career; they
19 followed their show with concerts in London and Amsterdam that
20 drew ecstatic audiences, then returned to work on a musical
21 adaptation of E. Lynn Harris's novel "Invisible Life"; and

22 WHEREAS, Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson are the operators
23 of the Sugar Bar, a popular Manhattan restaurant known for its

1 renowned Thursday Night Open Mic events, where anyone can
2 perform a song with the stellar house band; the Sugar Bar has
3 featured acts such as Patti LaBelle, Stevie Wonder, Paul
4 Shaffer, Michael McDonald, Jimmy Buffett, Queen Latifah, and
5 John Rich; and

6 WHEREAS, Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson are continuously
7 involved in community service; Val currently serves as a member
8 of the ASCAP Board of Directors and as national spokesperson
9 for the Speaking of Woman's Health organization; Nick currently
10 serves on the Board of Directors for George Faison's Firehouse
11 Theatre; together, they regularly perform at important charity
12 events, such as Atlanta's recent 24th Annual Mayor's MASKED
13 Ball (Mankind Assisting Students Kindle Educational Dreams),
14 an event supporting the United Negro College Fund; and

15 WHEREAS, Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson have been the
16 recipients of many honors and awards; two honors, however,
17 stand out as special milestones for the duo; Val's special
18 milestone consists of her name on a street sign in the Bronx
19 Walk of Fame, in commemoration of her achievements by her proud
20 neighborhood; Nick's special milestone is an inscription from
21 Val that says "Nick Ashford slept here" on the park bench in
22 Bryant Park that he called home when he first came to New York,
23 symbolizing the long journey they've traveled together since
24 that fateful day at White Rock Baptist; and

1 WHEREAS, Ashford & Simpson are well known throughout the
2 music industry and their legions of devoted fans as one of the
3 most acclaimed and admired creative couples in contemporary
4 music; therefore, be it

5 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
6 NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
7 honor Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson for their many years
8 of success and wish them continued success and happiness in the
9 future; and be it further

10 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
11 presented to Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson as a symbol
12 of our esteem and respect.