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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Deborah M. Sawyer, who passed away on August 7, 2016 at the age of 60; and

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WHEREAS, Deborah Sawyer was the founder, President, and CEO of Chicago-based Environmental Design International (EDI); for over 25 years, she inspired countless women and minority business owners; she broke the glass ceiling for black women in the engineering and environmental fields of science; and

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WHEREAS, Deborah Sawyer earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Emory University and a Master of Science in petroleum microbiology from Eastern New Mexico University; and

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WHEREAS, Under the leadership of Deborah Sawyer, EDI grew to over 70 employees and continues to provide engineering and environmental consulting services to governmental agencies and Fortune 500 companies, and is a certified Woman and Minority-Owned Business Enterprise; and

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WHEREAS, In 2012, Deborah Sawyer was one of five entrepreneurs who received the Green Award from Chicago

1 Magazine after demonstrating that good business sense and
2 protecting the environment are not mutually exclusive; she was
3 also central in securing EDI's role as Engineer of Record for
4 Exelon City Solar, the largest urban solar power plant in the
5 United States; and

6 WHEREAS, Deborah Sawyer and EDI won and finished a prime
7 contract as part of the Illinois Department of Transportation's
8 more than \$900 million reconstruction project to rebuild and
9 widen the local and express lanes on the I-90/94 Dan Ryan
10 Expressway in Chicago; EDI provided construction engineering
11 and inspection services for the improvements of 5.1 miles of
12 I-90/94 northbound local and express lanes from 71st Street to
13 31st Street; the construction costs for this segment were more
14 than \$100 million and it was one of the first major African
15 American-only prime engineering contracts for a highway
16 project in the United States; and

17 WHEREAS, Deborah Sawyer and EDI received many local, State,
18 and national awards, including the Illinois Black Chamber of
19 Commerce Outstanding Business of the Year Award in 2013, the
20 U.S. Small Business Association Minority Small Business of the
21 Year Award, the State Farm Phenomenal Woman Award, the Chicago
22 Women of Achievement Award, the ACEC-Illinois Engineers
23 Community Service Award, and the Women's Business Enterprise
24 National Council Woman-Owned Business Star Award; and

1 WHEREAS, Deborah Sawyer showed unwavering commitment to
2 service in Chicago; she served on many charitable boards and
3 dedicated her free time to the students at the Young Women's
4 Leadership Charter School of Chicago, encouraging them to
5 pursue studies in science and engineering; and

6 WHEREAS, Deborah Sawyer was a friend and neighbor of
7 President Barack Obama in the Kenwood-Hyde Park neighborhood;
8 she maintained a longtime and close relationship with the
9 President; and

10 WHEREAS, Deborah Sawyer is survived by her mother, Betty P.
11 Sawyer; her sister, Leslie J. Sawyer (Rick Redmon); her
12 brother, Dr. William Gregory Sawyer (Dr. Rita Gloria Sawyer);
13 and her beloved pets; therefore, be it

14 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
15 NINETY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
16 express our sorrow at the death of Deborah M. Sawyer and join
17 her family and community in mourning the loss of this great
18 trailblazer of women in engineering,; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
20 presented to the family of Deborah Sawyer as an expression of
21 our sympathy.