



SR2275

LRB099 23558 MST 51040 r

1

SENATE RESOLUTION

2

WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened to learn of the death of Hester Barbara Nelson Suggs; and

3

4

WHEREAS, Hester Suggs was born to Cecil and Carrie (Earnest) Nelson in Champaign on April 30, 1928; she graduated from Champaign High School in 1945 and entered the University of Illinois in the fall of 1945; in 1947, she pledged the Gamma Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., where she remained a lifelong member and served four terms as baselius for the graduate chapter, Epsilon Epsilon Omega, and as a graduate advisor to Gamma; she married Raymond Eugene Suggs in June of 1948; and

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

WHEREAS, In the late 1940s, Hester Suggs served as a teacher in the Douglas Center Kindergarten Association, a community-based organization that provided early childhood education for African American children in Champaign-Urbana, during the time of a segregated school system; beginning in the early 1950s, she concentrated on raising her family; and

14

15

16

17

18

19

WHEREAS, In 1961, Hester Suggs resumed her career as an educator, serving as the afternoon kindergarten teacher at Booker T. Washington School; she returned to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1961 to complete her bachelor's

20

21

22

1 degree in elementary education, completing it in 1963; she
2 completed her student teaching at Leal Elementary School in
3 Urbana, where she was later hired; both Champaign and Urbana
4 Schools were in the process of desegregation and her early
5 experiences of combating racism were documented in a 1984
6 article in the Illinois Times, "Black Women Who Beat the Odds";
7 she finished her master's degree in elementary education from
8 the University in 1965; and

9 WHEREAS, Hester Suggs joined Champaign School District
10 Unit 4 as a fifth grade teacher at Dr. Howard School; with the
11 establishment of the gifted program in Unit 4, she was
12 designated as the teacher for the gifted for fifth grade; she
13 served as a teacher trainer for the Illinois State Board of
14 Education, spending weekends conducting workshops in the area
15 of gifted education for teachers across east central Illinois;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, In 1971, Hester Suggs was selected as the
18 principal of Booker T. Washington Elementary School in
19 Champaign Unit 4, a position she held for 22 years, retiring in
20 1993; in 1980, she successfully secured a grant from the United
21 States Department of Education to establish programs that
22 emphasized "foreign languages, music, cultural and performing
23 arts, and interpretive thinking for children in kindergarten
24 through the fifth grade"; and

1 WHEREAS, In 1988, Hester Suggs received the Service
2 Recognition Award for Administrators from the Illinois
3 Alliance for Arts in Education; in 1997, she was honored at a
4 dinner given by the National Council of African-American Men;
5 she received the Booker T. Washington Award for education from
6 the Urban League and the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce;
7 the Champaign Urbana Schools Foundation established the Hester
8 Suggs Endowment Fund to provide grants expanding the arts and
9 humanities for African-American children in Champaign Unit 4;
10 in 2012, she was a recipient of "A Living Legend" award from
11 the Champaign County Section of the National Council of Negro
12 Women; at the 2014 Centennial Celebration of the Gamma Chapter
13 of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., she was honored for
14 "extraordinary sisterhood and exemplary service" to the
15 chapter; and

16 WHEREAS, Hester Suggs served on the boards of the Community
17 Foundation of Champaign County, Mercy Hospital, the Girls Club,
18 and the Illini Rebounders; after retirement, she continued her
19 community service; she volunteered with the local Illinois
20 Retired Teachers Association and was a member of the Champaign
21 County African-American History Committee; she is a lifelong
22 member of Bethel AME Church in Champaign; and

23 WHEREAS, Hester Suggs was preceded in death by her husband

1 of over 66 years, Eugene; therefore, be it

2 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-NINTH GENERAL
3 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn the passing of
4 Hester Barbara Nelson Suggs, and extend our sincere condolences
5 to her family, friends, and all who knew and loved her; and be
6 it further

7 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
8 presented to the family of Hester Suggs as an expression of our
9 deepest sympathy.