

1 HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives wish to express their sincere condolences to
4 the family and friends of Mari-Rae Sopper, a native of
5 Inverness, Illinois, who passed away on September 11, 2001 on
6 American Airlines Flight 77; and

7 WHEREAS, Mari-Rae Sopper was born on June 19, 1966 to
8 Bill Sopper and Marian Kminek; and

9 WHEREAS, Mari-Rae Sopper was a graduate of William Fremd
10 High School in Palatine, where she competed in gymnastics;
11 during her high school career she was named an All-American
12 on all four events, a state champion gymnast, Fremd High
13 School's Athlete of the Year and Illinois' Outstanding Senior
14 Gymnast of the Year; in addition, she excelled in academics
15 earning recognition as an Illinois State Scholar and a
16 National Merit Scholar; and

17 WHEREAS, Ms. Sopper went on to Iowa State University and
18 graduated with a degree in Exercise Science; she competed for
19 four years on the Iowa State Women's Gymnastics team, where
20 she was voted Iowa State's Most Valuable Gymnast in her
21 senior year; and

22 WHEREAS, After graduating from Iowa State, Ms. Sopper
23 earned her master's degree in Athletic Administration from
24 North Texas University; at the same time, she served as a
25 Junior Olympic Gymnastics coach in Dallas, where she was
26 well-known in the nation's gymnastics community and had a
27 reputation for her beautifully choreographed dance routines;
28 and

29 WHEREAS, Ms. Sopper was a strong advocate for women's
30 rights and civil rights, beliefs that led her to enroll at
31 the University of Denver College of Law, where she was a

1 member of the Law Review and graduated in 1996; while
2 completing her law degree, she served as an assistant coach
3 at the Colorado Gymnastics Institute; and

4 WHEREAS, Ms. Sopper practiced law in Washington, D.C. as
5 a Lieutenant on the Navy's JAG Corps focusing on Defense and
6 Appellate Defense; she was also a member of the Supreme Court
7 Bar; while in Washington, she kept her enthusiasm for
8 gymnastics alive by serving as an assistant coach and
9 choreographer for the U.S. Naval Academy women's gymnastics
10 team; most recently, she was an assistant coach and
11 choreographer at George Washington University; and

12 WHEREAS, Ms. Sopper left the JAG Corps and became an
13 associate at the law firm of Schmeltzer, Aptaker and Shepard;
14 after serving for a year, she realized that her desire to
15 coach gymnastics was overwhelming and therefore accepted the
16 head coach position at the University of California at Santa
17 Barbara for the women's gymnastics team; and

18 WHEREAS, The passing of Mari-Rae Sopper will be deeply
19 felt by all who knew and loved her, especially her parents,
20 Bill Sopper and Marion (husband, Frank) Kminek; her sisters,
21 Tammy Sopper, Christina Kminek, and Stacy Sopper; her
22 brothers, Christopher Kminek and Frank (wife, Beth) Kminek;
23 her grandparents, Lilian Dahlstrom and Janie Bonara; and her
24 many friends and colleagues whose lives she touched in more
25 ways than one; therefore, be it

26 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
27 NINETY-SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
28 we mourn, along with all who knew her, the death of Mari-Rae
29 Sopper, formerly of Inverness, Illinois; and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
31 presented to the family of Mari-Rae Sopper with our sincere
32 condolences.