

February 21, 2001

01-0221-RS4

**RESOLUTION RE: THE LATE GWENDOLYN BROOKS
FORMER POET LAUREATE FOR THE STATE OF ILLINOIS**

WHEREAS, Gwendolyn Brooks was born in Topeka, Kansas, in 1917, and during that year was brought by her family to Chicago; and

WHEREAS, she was educated at Forrestville Elementary School; Hyde Park, Wendell Phillips, and Englewood high schools; and Wilson Junior College; and

WHEREAS, at 14 years old, she had her first poem published, and at 16 years of age, she was a contributing poet to the Chicago Daily Defender, the leading African American newspaper at that time; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from Wilson Junior College during the Depression, she could only secure employment as a domestic worker; and

WHEREAS, she did not allow her employment as a domestic worker to prevent her from pursuing her dream of writing poetry; and

WHEREAS, she refined her writing skills by attending poetry workshops at the Southside Community Art Center and by meeting important literary giants such as Richard Wright, Margaret Walker, Theodore Ward, Langston Hughes, Frank Marshall Davis, James Weldon Johnson, and Arna Bontemps; and

WHEREAS, beginning in the 1940s, her ability as a poet was recognized nationally in such periodicals as Negro Story, Cross Section, Harpers, Poetry Magazine, and the Yale Review; and

WHEREAS, she focused her poetry on the everyday life of ordinary people; and

WHEREAS, she received the Midwestern Writer's Conference poetry award in 1943 and the American Academy of Letters Award and the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1946; and

WHEREAS, for her series of poems published collectively as Annie Allen, Ms. Brooks received the 1950 Pulitzer Prize for Literature, the first black writer to be so honored; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Brooks taught at Columbia College; Elmhurst College; Northeastern Illinois State College; the University of Wisconsin; and the City College of New York; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, she was named the poet laureate of Illinois; and

WHEREAS, she authored more than twenty books on poetry, received numerous awards and honors, and had a lifelong commitment to learning, literacy, and poetry; and

WHEREAS, February is Black History Month, during which achievements by African Americans are recognized; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Brooks loved the South Side of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the local school council of the Southside College Prep High School has voted for and petitioned the Chicago Board of Education to effect a school name change to the Gwendolyn Brooks College Prep High School at the Chicago Board of Education meeting on March 28, 2001;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the President and Members of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago gathered here this 21st day of February, 2001, commemorate both the literary and humanitarian achievements of the late Gwendolyn Brooks. To children all over the world, she leaves a legacy of hope, encouragement, artistic excellence, and the knowledge that one's dreams can be realized through diligence and perseverance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this resolution be forwarded to the family of Gwendolyn Brooks and to Southside College Prep High School.