**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR DR. CLEVELAND L. SELLERS, JR., PRESIDENT OF VOORHEES COLLEGE, UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT AFTER EIGHT YEARS OF DISTINGUISHED AND EXEMPLARY SERVICE, AND TO WISH HIM CONTINUED SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS IN ALL HIS FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina Senate have learned that civil rights pioneer Cleveland L. Sellers, Jr., will begin a richly‑deserved retirement after a distinguished career in higher education, the last eight of which have been as the distinguished and highly‑regarded president of Voorhees College; and

Whereas, although reared in Denmark, South Carolina, Cleveland Sellers was shaped significantly by events of the civil rights movement throughout the South. The racially-motivated lynching of African American teenager Emmitt Till in 1955 awakened a passion for civil rights in young Cleveland Sellers, and when a series of nonviolent sit-in protests at a department store lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, inspired similar events around the South in 1960, fifteen-year old Cleveland Sellers organized such a sit-in at a lunch counter in Denmark, thus beginning his active participation in the struggle for African American civil rights; and

Whereas, Cleveland Sellers graduated from Voorhees School in 1962, the same year in which Voorhees received accreditation as a four-year college. He then enrolled in Howard University at the encouragement of his father, but after one year he suspended his studies to join the growing civil rights movement in the South. During this time, he assisted with voter registration efforts and marched with Martin Luther King, Jr., in peaceful demonstrations to promote the cause of civil rights for African Americans; and

Whereas, on February 8, 1968, in one of the seminal events in the civil rights struggle in South Carolina, Cleveland Sellers was among the twenty‑seven injured in the Orangeburg Massacre, which occurred on the South Carolina State University campus when law enforcement officers opened fire at a group gathered to protest local segregation practices. He was the only person arrested in connection with the event, and served seven months in prison on rioting charges. Twenty-five years later, his actions were pardoned by Gov. Carroll Campbell; and

Whereas, while incarcerated, Cleveland Sellers decided to complete his education and move his civil rights battle to the classroom by educating young people. Consequently, he resumed his college studies and earned a bachelor’s degree from Shaw University, a master’s degree in education from Harvard University, and a doctorate in education from the University of North Carolina in Greensboro; and

Whereas, Dr. Sellers served with distinction as the director of the African‑American studies program at the University of South Carolina for many years. On April 22, 2008, he was named the eighth president of Voorhees College, where a half century earlier he served as school mascot at the age of three; and

Whereas, a distinguished scholar, Dr. Sellers’s interests include recording the history of protest traditions and civil rights, focusing on the oral history of African Americans who shaped the history of South Carolina, including cultural groupings and the languages of Gullah, Creole, and Geechee. He also has studied the survival experiences of African Americans, sometimes recorded in folklore but often unrecorded; and

Whereas, a life-long Episcopalian, Dr. Sellers has served as warden at St. Philip’s Episcopal Church in Denmark and on the board of the Episcopal Church Foundation. He is a member of the prestigious Kosmos Club, Columbia’s oldest dinner-discussion club, the South Carolina State Board of Education, the South Carolina African American Heritage Committee, the Organization of American Historians, and the Southern Historical Association; and

Whereas, an Eagle Scout of the Boys Scouts of America, Dr. Sellers has received numerous honors for his service, including the 2009 Freedom Flame Award from the National Voting Rights Museum and Institute; 2009 Legacy Award from the United Negro College Fund; 2008 Instructor Emeritus and 2003 Ada B. Thomas Outstanding Faculty Advisor Award, both from the University of South Carolina; and an honorary doctor of civil law in 2009 from the University of the South; and

Whereas, together with his beloved wife, Gwendolyn, Dr. Sellers has reared three outstanding children: Dr. Nosizwé A. Sellers; the Reverend Cleveland L. Sellers, III; and the Honorable Bakari Sellers, an attorney and CNN commentator; and

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina Senate are grateful for the years of unparalleled dedication that Cleveland Sellers has devoted to education in our State and wish him many years of enjoyment in his well‑earned retirement. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That members of the Senate of the State of South Carolina, by this resolution, recognize and honor Dr. Cleveland L. Sellers, Jr., President of Voorhees College, upon the occasion of his retirement after eight years of distinguished and exemplary service, and wish him continued success and happiness in all his future endeavors.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Dr. Cleveland L. Sellers, Jr.

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