**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO EXPRESS THE PROFOUND SORROW OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA SENATE UPON THE PASSING OF REVEREND WILLIE J. NELSON, OF RICHLAND COUNTY, AND TO EXTEND THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY AND MANY FRIENDS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina Senate were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Reverend Willie J. Nelson, of Richland County, on February 13, 2009; and

Whereas, born in Clarendon County on May 18, 1927, Willie J. Nelson was the son of Leon and Fannie Gary Nelson. After his mother’s death, he and his six brothers and sisters were reared by his father and stepmother, Mrs. Clotelle Nelson. After completing his early education in the public schools of Clarendon County, he entered Columbia’s Allen University and earned his bachelor of arts in elementary education, followed by a bachelor of divinity degree from Dickerson Theological Seminary; and

Whereas, a servant of God and of his country, Willie J. Nelson served two years in the United States Armed Forces. Assigned to Germany during the Korean conflict, he completed his military assignment honorably, having earned the rank of sergeant; and

Whereas, a lifelong member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, young Willie grew up in Laurel Hill AME Church. He accepted the call to ministry and was licensed an itinerant deacon in 1953 and itinerant elder in 1955. Early pastoral appointments took him to churches in Greenville, Florence, and Manning, after which he pastored St. John AME Church in Bishopville for seventeen years; and

Whereas, after St. John AME Church, Reverend Nelson was appointed to Chappelle Memorial AME Church in Columbia, where he served for twenty‑two years. Under the Lord’s blessing, he and his congregation completed major structural renovations to the church and several other important projects. Among his many achievements there, he counts as one of the most prized the establishment and organization of the annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Celebration, a program that has continued each year since its inception. Reverend Nelson also helped to promote many African Americans running for various political offices; and

Whereas, following a three‑year appointment at Friendship AME Church in Columbia, Reverend Nelson was appointed to the position of presiding elder of the Columbia District of the Columbia Annual Conference of the 7th Episcopal District of the AME Church, an office he held for six years, during which he was instrumental in establishing a new AME church in the Columbia area; and

Whereas, in addition to his duties as a pastor, he worked for more than twenty years for the Sperry and Hutchinson Company, also retiring from the State of South Carolina Department of Youth Services after more than ten years of service to the Group Home Program; and

Whereas, in his more than fifty years of ministry and community service, Reverend Nelson was a member of numerous organizations, held countless positions of leadership, and received accolades and awards that reflected appreciation for his labors. He was a member of the board of trustees of Allen University and of the original committee responsible for establishing the Harvest Hope Food Bank. A life member of the NAACP, he received the organization’s Faith Leadership Award in 2004. In 2003, he was presented with the Key to the City of Columbia; and

Whereas, after retirement, he joined Bethel AME Church in Columbia, where he remained active in his service to the Lord as a church member; and

Whereas, married to the former Carrie Richburg in 1953, he shared with her fifty‑six years of happiness and contentment, the Lord blessing their union with two children; and

Whereas, in addition to his beloved wife, he leaves daughters Yvonne Means and Helen Grant, ten grandchildren, three great‑grandchildren, and a host of other relatives and friends. His memory will be cherished by all who knew him, and he will be greatly missed. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, express their profound sorrow upon the passing of Reverend Willie J. Nelson, of Richland County, and extend the deepest sympathy to his family and many friends.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Mrs. Carrie Nelson for the family.

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