**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO CONGRATULATE BISHOP RICHARD FRANKLIN NORRIS, MOTHER MARY ANN NORRIS, AND THE PRESIDING ELDERS, PASTORS, AND LAITY OF THE SEVENTH EPISCOPAL DISTRICT OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH FOR THEIR SIGNIFICANT WORK TO RESTORE THE HISTORIC CHAPPELLE AUDITORIUM ON THE CAMPUS OF ALLEN UNIVERSITY.

Whereas, the Chappelle Auditorium was designed by the first African‑American architect, John Anderson Lankford, in 1922 and was erected on the campus of Allen University in 1925; and

Whereas, built and financed by African Americans, the auditorium offered one of the largest public facilities in the Columbia area at that time with a seating capacity of seven hundred. It provided an essential place in the community for African Americans to meet publicly for political and cultural purposes at a time when few options for public meeting places existed for African Americans; and

Whereas, during the 1940s and 1950s, the state NAACP met numerous times in the auditorium to conduct business and hold special meetings. Nationally known musicians and artists have performed in Chappelle Auditorium, such as soprano Leotyne Price, blues singer Brook Benton, and writer and poet Langston Hughes; and

Whereas, other notable persons to grace the stage of the auditorium have included educator and college president Mary McLeod Bethune; heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali; the Reverend Jesse Jackson; the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and Senator Strom Thurmond, who was awarded an honorary doctorate; and

Whereas, more than forty years ago, the United States Department of the Interior placed the Chappelle Auditorium on the National Register of Historic Places in South Carolina and recognized it as a National Historic Landmark, one of twenty structures on historically black colleges so marked for preservation; and

Whereas, after seventy‑five years of continuous use, the once‑grand and historic auditorium deteriorated to the point that it was no longer habitable and had to be closed for use. The restoration of this celebrated landmark, captures a period in American history and reflects the identity and cultural heritage of a people; and

Whereas, to launch the renovation of the exterior of the building, Allen officials secured one million dollars from a federal stimulus grant in 2009, and 1.8 million dollars from the United States Department of Education and the South Carolina Department of Education, a quarter of a million dollars from Boeing, and one hundred thousand dollars from SCANA Corporation for the interior renovation; and

Whereas, original tin ceiling tiles of the seventy‑three hundred square‑foot Chappell Auditorium were successfully restored, along with glass blocks, the arched framework, ornate bannisters, the curved balcony which will have a brass railing, and the intricate woodwork of the doorways; and

Whereas, the opulent chandelier, though not original to the building, became one of its cherished memories, so it was taken down when restoration began, and the one hundred fifty‑pound light fixture and its dozens of leaded crystal parts were carefully wrapped and driven by the project manager to Pennsylvania for restoration; and

Whereas, the restored Chappell Auditorium will provide not only seating for five hundred fifty people on the main floor and balcony, but also a reminder of the auditorium’s vibrant past and rich history, as a result of the tireless efforts of Reverend Norris, his beloved wife, Mother Mary Ann Norris, and the Seventh Episcopal District; and

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives is pleased to learn that a part of the restored auditorium will be named the Bishop Richard Franklin Norris Performing Arts Center, and the members value the momentous work of those involved in restoring this historic landmark. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, congratulate Bishop Richard Franklin Norris, Mother Mary Ann Norris, and the presiding elders, pastors, and laity of the Seventh Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church for their significant work to restore the historic Chappelle Auditorium on the campus of Allen University.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Bishop Richard Franklin Norris.

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