**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO CONGRATULATE WILLIE MAE OWENS‑ROSS OF ORANGEBURG COUNTY ON THE OCCASION OF HER ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY AND TO WISH HER A JOYOUS BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AND MUCH HAPPINESS IN THE DAYS AHEAD.

Whereas, on September 29, 2016, Willie Mae Owens‑Ross, a lifelong resident of Orangeburg County, will awaken to the celebration of a milestone event: her one hundredth birthday; and

Whereas, one of nine children born to Isaiah and Viola Phillips, the young Willie Mae came into this world on September 29, 1916, when the twentieth century was still in its youth, and she has been witness to nearly all the incredible changes and developments that have come to this nation from that time into the second decade of the twenty‑first century; and

Whereas, born, raised, and educated in the public schools of Branchville, Willie Mae joined the town’s Zion Methodist Church at an early age. She served the Lord there until her marriage to Clifton Owens on February 20, 1936, at which time she joined the McBranch Baptist Church. Today, she remains an active member of McBranch Baptist, serving there with the usher board, missionary society, and choir; and

Whereas, in time, Willie Mae and Clifton became the proud parents of eleven children. Sadly, four of them passed away prematurely, two before reaching adulthood and two thereafter. Clifton passed away in 1984, and Willie Mae married the Reverend Blease Ross in 1985, joyfully welcoming his four adult children and their families as her own. Willie Mae has been blessed with thirty‑nine grandchildren, fifty‑seven great‑grandchildren, and one great‑great‑grandchild; and

Whereas, Willie Mae spent a number of years rearing her children and eighteen years working as a supervisor in the housekeeping department at the Methodist Home in Orangeburg, where she was named Employee of the Month in March 1983. She also served two years as a home health care volunteer after her retirement from the Methodist Home. Even now, she continues to work two days a week because she enjoys getting out of the house; and

Whereas, during her long life, Willie Mae has been involved in numerous organizations, including thirty‑five years as secretary of the Free Gift Union. She has a lifetime membership in the Eastern Star, as well; and

Whereas, she is the recipient of multiple honors, among them the 2013 Lovely Hill Women’s Convention Woman of the Year Award, the 2014 Free Gift Missionary Union Dedicated Services Award, and the 2014 Owens Family Reunion Wisdom Award; and

Whereas, one of Willie Mae’s very favorite things to do is to take a ride through beautiful Edisto Gardens in Orangeburg, where she marvels at the beauty of the flowers in full bloom. Whenever she is asked how she’s feeling, her response is always the same: “I ain’t complaining; the Lord has been good to me”; and

Whereas, Willie Mae Owens‑Ross continues to enjoy life and loves to go out for dinner at least once a week. She is greatly loved and respected by her family, friends, neighbors, and everyone fortunate enough to have met her and is never without a smile; and

Whereas, the South Carolina Senate takes great pleasure in honoring this daughter of South Carolina at the celebration of her one hundredth birthday and joins with her family and friends in congratulating her on reaching this important life milestone. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, congratulate Willie Mae Owens‑Ross of Orangeburg County on the occasion of her one hundredth birthday and wish her a joyous birthday celebration and much happiness in the days ahead.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Willie Mae Owens‑Ross.

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