**A** **JOINT RESOLUTION**

TO CREATE THE DR. BENJAMIN E. MAYS MONUMENT COMMISSION AND PROVIDE FOR THE COMMISSION’S MEMBERSHIP, DUTIES, AND RELATED MATTERS, AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE MORATORIUM AGAINST THE PLACEMENT OF NEW MONUMENTS ON THE STATE HOUSE GROUNDS CONTAINED IN SECTION 2‑1‑240 IS LIFTED SOLELY TO CARRY OUT THE LIMITED PURPOSE OF THIS JOINT RESOLUTION.

Whereas, Benjamin Elijah Mays was born on August 1, 1894, or 1895, in what is now Epworth, South Carolina, in rural Greenwood County; and

Whereas, as the youngest of eight children born to Louvenia Carter and Hezekiah Mays, tenant farmers and former slaves, a consistent theme in Dr. Mays’s early life was his insatiable desire for education against overwhelming odds; and

Whereas, refusing to be limited by the widespread poverty and prevalent racism of that era, after receiving his bachelor’s degree from Bates College in Maine, Dr. Mays entered the University of Chicago as a graduate student, earning an master’s degree in 1925 and a Ph.D. in the School of Religion in 1935; and

Whereas, shortly before completing his dissertation at the University of Chicago in the spring of 1935, Mays accepted a position as dean of the School of Religion at Howard University in Washington, D.C. where he distinguished himself as an effective administrator, elevating the Howard program to legitimacy and distinction among schools of religion; and

Whereas, after six years at Howard, Mays accepted an offer in 1940 to become president of Morehouse College, which at that time was plagued by severe problems, including low student and faculty morale and a nearly one million dollar loss in endowment money; and

Whereas, Dr. Mays’s leadership transformed the school. In his twenty‑seven years as president, he supervised donations of more than fifteen million dollars and oversaw the construction of eighteen buildings, elevating the school’s status as a liberal arts college; and

Whereas, during his tenure as president of Morehouse College, Dr. Mays rose to national prominence, serving as an advisor to presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and his unwavering emphasis on two ideas in particular, the dignity of all human beings and the incompatibility of American democratic ideals with American social practices, left a deep impression on his most famous student, Martin Luther King, Jr.; and

Whereas, during King’s years as an undergraduate at Morehouse College in the 1940s, he and Dr. Mays developed a close relationship that would continue until King’s death. When King won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, Dr. Mays organized a successful citywide celebration in Atlanta, and at King’s funeral just four years later, it was Dr. Mays who gave the eulogy; and

Whereas, after Dr. Mays retired as president of Morehouse College in 1967, he served for twelve years as the first African-American chair of the Atlanta school board and oversaw the desegregation of the Atlanta public school system between 1970 and 1981; and

Whereas, Dr. Mays’s unwavering commitment to improving life for African Americans through education, religion, and nonviolent demonstration deserves to be honored in a manner befitting of his contributions. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. The Dr. Benjamin E. Mays Monument Commission is created to design and establish an appropriate statue or monument to be placed on the grounds of the Capitol Complex to honor Dr. Benjamin E. Mays for his historical contributions, accomplishments, and achievements dedicated to improving life for African Americans through education, religion, and peaceful demonstration. The commission is empowered and directed to raise private funds, to receive private grants, to receive gifts to carry out the purpose for which it is created, and to recommend the location of the statue or monument, provided that this statue or monument must be funded entirely by private funds.

By February 1, 2019, the commission shall report the proposed design, location, and dedication date to the State House Committee.

By March 1, 2019, the commission shall report the proposed design, location, and dedication date of the statue or monument to the General Assembly. The commission shall consult the Department of Administration on the matter of the site and the department shall advise and render necessary service to the commission on this matter. Upon the dedication of this statue or monument, the commission shall dissolve. The final decision of the location of the statue or monument rests with the General Assembly. Upon dissolution, the State shall ensure proper maintenance of the statue or monument as is done for other historical monuments on the grounds of the Capitol Complex. The commission must be comprised of three members of the Senate to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, three members of the House of Representatives to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and three members who may or may not be members of the General Assembly to be appointed by the Governor. Notwithstanding Section 8‑13‑770 or another provision of law, members of the General Assembly may be appointed to this commission and may serve on the commission, which must not be considered an office of honor or profit of this State. Commission members are not entitled to receive the subsistence, mileage, and per diem otherwise provided by law for members of state boards, committees, and commissions.

SECTION 2. The moratorium against the placement of new monuments on the State House grounds contained in Section 2‑1‑240 is lifted solely to carry out the limited purpose of this joint resolution.

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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