**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO EXPRESS THE PROFOUND SORROW OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES UPON THE PASSING OF THE HONORABLE MARION FRANCIS “SONNY” RILEY, JR., OF ALLENDALE COUNTY AND TO EXTEND THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY AND MANY FRIENDS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives were saddened to learn of the death of the Honorable Marion Francis “Sonny” Riley, Jr., of Allendale County on June 8, 2018, at the venerable age of seventy‑five; and

Whereas, born October 3, 1942, in Allendale County, Sonny Riley was the son of Marion Francis Riley, Sr., and Mary Garvin Riley. He was nurtured not only in the home of his parents but also in that of his maternal grandparents, the Reverend Leroy Garvin and Mrs. Beulah Garvin; and

Whereas, Sonny’s faith in God was expressed at an early age when he united with the membership of Bethel A.M.E. Church in Fairfax. He attended services there with his family until his health declined; and

Whereas, in preparation for one of his two careers, this graduate of Fairfax Training School, Class of 1960, also graduated from Eckel’s College of Mortuary Science, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1964; and

Whereas, Sonny Riley was united in marriage to the late Claudette Drayton Riley, their union being blessed with four children, Nick, Marcus, Traci, and the late Marion F. Riley III, who predeceased his father in death. In 1989, he wed Dorothy Smart‑Riley, and the two were blessed with a daughter, Renique. He adored his wife and children and was proud of all their accomplishments; and

Whereas, in 1970, Sonny Riley began his fifty‑nine‑year career in law enforcement by joining the Fairfax Police Department as a narcotics investigator. That career escalated in 1972 when he accepted a post with the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED), at that time under the leadership of the legendary Chief J.P. “Pete” Strom. Sonny’s SLED career was to last forty years; and

Whereas, the handle “Kojak” was given to him at that time, due to his high‑caliber investigative skills in the area of undercover detective work. He was very capable and found himself on the forefront of many high‑profile cases. If “Kojak” was on a case, he worked long and hard hours to make sure every avenue was explored. According to records, most of the cases he worked on were solved. He was an innovator in encouraging new police officers to train and be the best they could be. Some looked upon him as a hero amongst heroes. His career with SLED afforded him the honor of escorting such high‑profile personalities as the Reverend Jessie Jackson and the Reverend Bernice King, youngest daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and

Whereas, after retiring from SLED, Sonny obtained employment with the Hampton County Sheriff’s Department. A member of the Fraternal Order of Police for fifty‑nine years, he also worked as chief of police for the Town of Estill before retiring from law enforcement. By popular vote, he was elected to the office of Allendale County coroner in 2010; and

Whereas, in addition to being an accomplished and decorated law enforcement officer, Sonny was also owner, general manager, director, and embalmer of M.F. Riley’s Funeral Home in Fairfax. He had more than fifty‑nineyears of experience as a funeral director and embalmer. He was a member of the South Carolina Morticians Association, as well as of the National Morticians Association; and

Whereas, his wisdom and understanding, coupled with his experience and knowledge of the law, allowed him to carry out his law enforcement duties effectively, and he extended that same understanding, compassion, and encouragement, along with gentleness and humility, to the bereaved families he served at M.F. Riley’s Funeral Home. All of this impacted the development of a loyal and vast circle of friendship. Included in that circle were his former classmates of the Fairfax Training School, Class of 1960; and

Whereas, Sonny Riley strongly believed in active community involvement, and he put his convictions into action by serving his community in various capacities beyond his work in law enforcement and funeral services. In his leisure time, he was a sports official who refereed and umpired many games played in the Lowcountry area from Little League to varsity, and he himself played with the Fairfax Wildcats and Allendale Braves baseball teams. In addition, he was a member of the Allendale Consolidation Board and Gifford Masonic Lodge. He was highly respected, trusted, and well known all over the State of South Carolina; and

Whereas, among the most recent of the numerous honors Sonny Riley received for his many years of courageous and dedicated service are the New Life School of Theology Outstanding Lifetime Achievement Award in Law Enforcement and the Big Seven Association Community Service Award, both granted in 2018; and

Whereas, Sonny Riley leaves to cherish his memory his loving and devoted wife, Dorothy; his beloved children, Renique Riley, Sharrell Odom, Traci Riley, Stephanie Williams, Greta Green, Shirley Loadholt, LaToya Moore, Stephanie Harrison, Ronald Bradley, Nick Riley, Marcus Riley, Chauncey McLeod, Donald Bradley, Jeffery Bradley, Hubert Smart, and Eric Platts; thirty‑six grandchildren; numerous great‑grandchildren; and a host of other family members and friends. He will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, express their profound sorrow upon the passing of the Honorable Marion Francis “Sonny” Riley, Jr., of Allendale County and extend the deepest sympathy to his family and many friends.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Mrs. Dorothy Smart‑Riley for the family.

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