**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR DR. WILLIE LEE WILSON, PHILANTHROPIST, BUSINESSMAN, RECORDING ARTIST, AND GOSPEL TELEVISION HOST FOR HIS SIGNIFICANT PHILANTHROPIC EFFORTS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina Senate are pleased to commend the successful life and meaningful philanthropy of Dr. Willie Lee Wilson of Chicago, Illinois; and

Whereas, over the last three decades, Dr. Wilson has built several successful businesses and has returned as much as a million dollars annually to various needs and churches in the Black community; and

Whereas, born on June 16, 1948, in Gilbert, Louisiana, Dr. Wilson experienced a very humble childhood where neighbors made sure no one went hungry or homeless, a part of his life that continues to influence his actions today; and

Whereas, in 1965, he moved to Chicago, where he has resided more than five decades and where he became one of the first black owners of a McDonald’s restaurant. In 1970, he was hired by McDonald’s to do custodial work, mopping floors for two dollars an hour; and

Whereas, Dr. Wilson purchased a suffering Chicago franchise when McDonald’s founder, Ray Kroc, gave him a McDonald’s restaurant in 1979, and with capital provided by South Shore Bank, he turned the franchise around within a year and continued that pattern in other franchises; and

Whereas, in 1988, Dr. Wilson began to pursue his faith after hearing the song, “What Shall I Render unto the Lord?” in church, so he sold his McDonald’s restaurants to dedicate his life to Gospel music; and

Whereas, he began singing church solos and then singing with the Norfleet Brothers, creating such albums as *I*’*m So Grateful*, *Lord Don*’*t Let Me Fail*, *Just A Closer Walk With Thee*, *Through It All*, *Somewhere Listening*, *It Is I That Gain the More*, and *I*’*ll Fly Away*. He founded the long‑running Gospel television show *Singsation!* that broadcasts internationally on WGN‑TV, and he serves as its executive producer, where he and his music are well‑known; and

Whereas, ever the entrepreneur, Dr. Wilson founded Omar Medical Supplies in 1997, a multimillion‑dollar plastic glove distribution business with employees in the United States, as well as in Shanghai and Beijing, China, one of America’s fastest growing distributors of the product used in medical, industrial, and foodservice areas; and

Whereas, he has used his fortunes to help many, and in 2015, he donated one hundred fifty thousand dollars for the creation of a property‑tax relief fund with the Cook County Treasurer’s Office to help Chicago‑area homeowners in danger of losing their property in a county tax sale; and

Whereas, Dr. Wilson traveled the country running for President, and in 2015 he ran for mayor of Chicago, capturing eleven percent of the vote. During his campaigns, he has championed criminal‑justice reform, especially the system’s imbalance toward African Americans and Latinos, as well as high bail bonds for misdemeanor crimes that hold detainees for months who are unable to make bail, sometimes leading to job and home loss; and

Whereas, as a private citizen, he began identifying individuals who needed assistance and bailing them out. With help from the Cook County Sheriff’s Office, he received a list of detainees with small bonds and began selecting at random those who would receive money for bail. If they showed up for the court date, he would use the ninety percent refund to reinvest and help more detainees; and

Whereas, Dr. Wilson hopes to help bail out between one and two thousand people in 2017 and create an example that politicians and people with funds can emulate. He has enlisted support of more than one hundred churches, at least ten non‑profit organizations, and several public officials; and

Whereas, he has been honored with a Doctor of Divinity degree from Mt. Carmel Theological Seminary, a Doctor of Humane Letters from Chicago Baptist Institute International, an Honorary Doctorate in Humanitarianism from Swisher Bible College, and a Doctorate in Humanitarianism from Denver Institute of Urban Studies and Adult College. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, recognize and honor Dr. Willie Lee Wilson, philanthropist, businessman, recording artist, and gospel television host for his significant philanthropic efforts.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be provided to Dr. Willie Lee Wilson.

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