**A** **SENATE RESOLUTION**

TO HONOR AND REMEMBER THE INCOMPARABLE LIFE OF FORMER SOUTH CAROLINA CHIEF JUSTICE ERNEST ADOLPHUS FINNEY, JR., AND TO EXTEND THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY.

Whereas, on December 3, 2017, South Carolina lost a beloved son and a hero for equality and social justice. Ernest Adolphus Finney, Jr., will be long remembered as a groundbreaking attorney who fought for African‑American rights at the height of the civil rights struggle in the 1960s; and

Whereas, Ernest Finney graduated from Claflin College in 1952 and from South Carolina State’s law school in 1954. He commenced his career as an educator but went on to become a lawyer, specializing in civil rights advocacy and defense. In 1961, Finney represented the Friendship Nine, black students from Rock Hill’s Friendship College who were arrested for protesting a segregated lunch counter. The case launched the “Jail, No Bail” movement when the students opted to stay in jail rather than pay bail to an unjust system. More than fifty years later, Ernest Finney returned to a Rock Hill courtroom in 2015 with the surviving members of the Friendship Nine to have their convictions formally overturned; and

Whereas, in 1972, he was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives, joining its Judiciary Committee. Four years later, he was elected the state’s first black Circuit Court judge and in 1985 became the first African‑American Supreme Court justice since the Reconstruction period. His career culminated in 1994 when he rose to chief justice; and

Whereas, Justice Finney touched the lives of many. The Honorable Alex Sanders, who served with him in the House and, later, as a judge, describes him as “courageous all through his life.” The Honorable Jean Toal, also a former colleague, said, “In addition to being a great judge and lawyer, he was the most decent man I’ve ever known. He set the standard by which we are all judged. He’ll be remembered for more than his firsts. He was a brilliant man who hid his intellectual greatness with his mild, diffident manner.” His daughter, poet Nikky Finney, noted that her father passed on the night of a full moon and thought it “was apropos, given his long and luminous life and the light he shone on injustice and inequality”; and

Whereas, Justice Finney is survived by his beloved wife, Frances, and his three cherished children, Nikky, Ernest (“Chip”), who is the Solicitor for the Third Judicial Circuit, and Jerry, who is an attorney in Columbia. He also leaves behind five adored grandchildren; and

Whereas, the State of South Carolina was made better by the influence of Ernest Finney, Jr., and will greatly miss his impactful presence. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate:

That the members of the Senate of South Carolina, by this resolution, honor and remember the incomparable life of former South Carolina Chief Justice Ernest Adolphus Finney, Jr., and extend the deepest sympathy to his family.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Mrs. Frances Finney.

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