**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR MOE LEVY’S STORE, A LONGTIME COLUMBIA ICON, AND TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION FOR NEARLY A HUNDRED YEARS OF EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AND SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC IMPACT IN THE MIDLANDS.

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives has learned that the 99‑year‑old Moe Levy’s store, one of Columbia’s oldest businesses, is closing its doors in April 2019; and

Whereas, Moe Levy’s Army surplus store has been a Columbia institution since Moe Levy opened for business in a tin shack downtown at the corner of Assembly and Lady streets in 1920, and in almost ten decades the store has sold mountains of military uniforms, combat boots, outdoor gear, and countless pairs of jeans; and

Whereas, when Mr. Levy ascertained where the market for jeans was heading, he became one of the leading sellers of Levi brand jeans in South Carolina. In the early 1950s, it was difficult to procure the Levis, so he would put in an order six months before they would arrive; and

Whereas, the business was largely comprised of a pawn shop and the Army‑Navy surplus store, both housed in Mr. Levy’s building on Assembly Street. Florence Levy, who lived to be 106, never worked in her husband’s stores until his death in 1974 when she wanted something to do, so she went to work in Levy’s pawn shop where she remained until shortly before her death in 2013; and

Whereas, Moe Levy’s clothing store closed in 2014 and reopened on Laurel Street in 2016 where it has had less visibility and foot traffic, but its permanent closing is partly due to the decline of brick‑and‑mortar retailing in favor of online shopping and partly because Mr. Rittenberg, at age eighty‑eight, is ready to retire; and

Whereas, a native of Birmingham, Harold Rittenberg had worked in stores growing up in Alabama and served in the United States Army stationed at Fort Jackson when he met Gloria Levy, a senior at the University of South Carolina. They married six months later, and he became a natural addition to the Levy family business; and

Whereas, now the Rittenbergs’ son‑in‑law, Trent Grant, handles most of the business, and the store’s principal customer is the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department, which provides work clothes for people with disabilities; and

Whereas, although military surplus clothing and supplies overshadow the store’s inventory, such curios as collectors’ coins, jewelry, and an assortment of knives are displayed for sale in a glassed case, along with a World War II‑era Japanese bayonet encased in a black sheath; and

Whereas, Moe Levy’s sold goods to many notable customers through the years: a fur coat to Michael Jackson, a jean jacket to Johnny Cash, a gun to Roy Rogers, and a safari helmet to Governor Carroll Campbell, who presented it as a gift to President George H. W. Bush; and

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives is grateful for the role in Columbia’s history that Moe Levy’s store has had through almost a century, and the members bid a forlorn farewell to the name and to the store as to a dear, old friend. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, recognize and honor Moe Levy’s store, a longtime Columbia icon, and express appreciation for nearly a hundred years of exceptional service and significant economic impact in the Midlands.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Gloria and Harold Rittenberg.

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