**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO EXPRESS THE PROFOUND SORROW OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES UPON THE PASSING OF ROMEO WATKINS OF COLUMBIA AND TO EXTEND THE DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY AND MANY FRIENDS.

Whereas, the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Romeo Watkins of Columbia on April 30, 2020, at the venerable age of eighty‑one; and

Whereas, born in the Ridgewood community of Columbia on February 7, 1939, he was the son of the late Deacon Leroy and Beatrice Harris Watkins. The third child of eight, Romeo grew up in a loving home, anchored by a close‑knit community and deeply rooted in the church. His maternal grandmother, Agnes Harris, who lived next door, played an important role in the rearing and molding of Romeo and his siblings. He often told stories of traveling every summer with her to her hometown of Bronson, Florida. His maternal aunt, Mrs. Franklin Scott Harris, also played an important role in Romeo’s upbringing. A favorite nephew, he often stayed with “Aunt Franklin” at her home across the street from the South Carolina Governor’s Mansion; and

Whereas, the young Romeo was educated in the Richland County schools, attending Ridgewood Elementary School and Booker T. Washington High School. In 1961, he married the former Annette Caughman of Columbia, God blessing the couple with a fine family of four; and

Whereas, Romeo received his early Christian training in the home and served as a lifelong member of Ridgewood Baptist Church, which he joined as a child under the pastorate of the Reverend Z.E. Dennis. As a youth, he was a member of the first Ridgewood Baptist Junior Choir. He forged a friendship with the Reverend Jeremiah Witherspoon, Pastor Dennis’s successor, that spanned more than sixty years, enduring even after the Witherspoons relocated to Pennsylvania. Romeo’s service to Ridgewood Church continued during the forty‑year pastorate of the Reverend Dr. L.C. Chavous. A third‑generation member, Romeo served for many years on the Church History Committee and was regarded as a historian of the Ridgewood community. While he served in many capacities at his church, Romeo found his greatest joy in his long tenure in the Jubilee Choir, where he served as leader, as his father had before him. He was well known throughout the city for his expert knowledge of shape‑note singing and common‑meter hymns; and

Whereas, Romeo learned the value of hard work at an early age. In the mid‑1960s, he began work as a civilian at U.S. Army base Ft. Jackson, from which he retired in 1993. He began barbering as a ten‑year‑old, his first “customer” being his older brother Charles. He owned and operated a barber shop on North Main Street for over forty years. Ever the entrepreneur, he was a successful real estate agent in the 1970s. Known for his impeccable taste and style, Romeo was always fashionably dressed; and

Whereas, as a young caddy on Columbia’s segregated golf courses, Romeo developed a love of the game, and he enjoyed playing in golf tournaments across Columbia and throughout the State. He also served as commissioner of the Eau Claire Youth Baseball League; and

Whereas, Romeo leaves to cherish his memory his devoted wife of fifty‑eight years, Annette Caughman Watkins; four children, Quintus (Verdell) Young, Brigitte Watkins Long, Yelberton Romeo Watkins, and Vancito Ethridge Watkins; nine grandchildren, Quintus, Justin, Velicia, Gabrielle, Danielle, Autumn, Alexi, Tori, and Ashlyn; three great‑grandchildren, Jamari, Raleigh, and Solomon; and a host of other family members and friends. He will be greatly missed. 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 Romeo Watkins of Columbia 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. Annette Caughman Watkins.

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