**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO HONOR THE LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF STEPHEN ATKINS SWAILS, A PROMINENT AFRICAN AMERICAN STATESMAN IN SOUTH CAROLINA FOLLOWING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

Whereas, born February 23, 1832, Stephen Atkins Swails was a soldier in the Union Army during the American Civil War. Although originally enlisted as a private, he was the first African American soldier promoted to commissioned rank, as a line officer, in that conflict; and

Whereas, in May 1864, while his regiment was posted on Morris Island during the siege of Charleston, Swails’ application to muster as a second lieutenant with the regiment was refused by the War Department. The reason given was “Lieutenant Swails’ African descent”; and

Whereas, Second Lieutenant Swails was promoted to first lieutenant on April 28, 1865, and discharged on August 20, 1865. After the war, he worked as an agent for the Freedmen’s Bureau, practiced law in the South, and became active in the political life of South Carolina. He was the mayor of Kingstree, where he lived from 1868 to 1879. Further, he served as a state senator for ten years (1868‑1878), including three terms as president pro tem; and

Whereas, he was forced out of politics following Reconstruction. After a white mob tried to assassinate him, he resigned from office and, through his Republican connections, obtained jobs in Washington, D.C., with the United States Postal Service and the United States Treasury Department; and

Whereas, after a lifetime of service, Stephen Swails passed away on May 17, 1900, and was buried in the Friendly Society Cemetery in Charleston. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, honor the life and achievements of Stephen Atkins Swails, a prominent African American statesman in South Carolina following the American Civil War.

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