

Senate Resolution 1011

By: Senators Orrock of the 36th, Jordan of the 6th, Butler of the 55th, Davenport of the 44th, Tate of the 38th and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Commending Lillian E. Smith for her work as a gifted writer, educator, and activist who was
2 one of the first prominent white southerners to openly denounce racial segregation and be
3 recognized by the Georgia State Senate; and for other purposes.

4 WHEREAS, Lillian E. Smith was born in Jasper, Florida, and moved to Clayton, Georgia,
5 in 1915 at the age of 18, residing primarily in that area until her death in 1966; and

6 WHEREAS, in 1925, she became the director of Laurel Falls Camp for girls, the first private
7 camp for girls in Georgia and the first to accept Jewish campers, where she taught future
8 generations about racial equity until the camp closed in 1948; and

9 WHEREAS, from 1936 to 1945, Smith and her lifelong partner, Paula Snelling, published
10 a literary magazine that reached a circulation of 10,000 subscribers and became a creative
11 forum for white and black writers to share their literary and artistic work; and

12 WHEREAS, in 1944, Lillian published the novel *Strange Fruit*, which addressed the racial,
13 sexual, and spiritual tensions of a small southern community and became an international
14 bestseller and Broadway play; and

15 WHEREAS, in 1946, Smith went to India as part of the Famine Commission and as a guest
16 of the British government; and

17 WHEREAS, in 1949, she published *Killers of the Dream*, a detailed self-examination of
18 white supremacy that was republished in 1961 and became an important resource for the
19 Freedom Riders; and

20 WHEREAS, Lillian published *Now is the Time* in response to the Supreme Court decision
21 in *Brown v. Board of Education*, calling that decision "every child's magna carta"; and

22 WHEREAS, her last published work, *Our Faces, Our Words* (1964), published before her
23 ten year battle with cancer ended in 1966, applauded nonviolence in the civil rights
24 movement; and

25 WHEREAS, she worked closely with organizations such as the NAACP, SNCC, and CORE
26 on civil rights issues and supported the Atlanta Student Movement, paying for the manifesto
27 "An Appeal for Human Rights" to appear in the Atlanta newspaper; and

28 WHEREAS, Lillian corresponded and worked with civil rights activists such as Martin
29 Luther King Jr., Lonnie C. King Jr., Cliff and Virginia Durr, and more; and

30 WHEREAS, she was awarded the Honor Roll of Race Relations, Schomburg Collection of
31 New York Public Library (1942); Page One Award, Newspaper Guild of New York (1944);
32 Constance Lindsay Skinner Award, Women's National Book Association (1945); Southern
33 Authors Award, Special Citation National Book Award Committee; honorary Doctorate of
34 Humane Letters, Howard University; honorary Doctor of Letters, Oberlin College (1950);
35 Georgia Writers Award (1955); Sidney Hillman Prize (1962); Queen Esther Scroll of
36 Women's Division of the American Jewish Congress (1965); and Charles S. Johnson Award
37 of Fisk University (1966); and

38 WHEREAS, since 1968, the Southern Regional Council and the University of Georgia
39 libraries have held the Lillian Smith Book Awards to honor authors and works that carry on
40 Smith's legacy of highlighting racial and social inequality and proposing paths toward justice
41 and human understanding; and

42 WHEREAS, in 2000, Lillian was part of the first class inducted into the Georgia Writers Hall
43 of Fame alongside Martin Luther King Jr., W. E. B. Du Bois, and John Oliver Killens; and

44 WHEREAS, Laurel Falls Camp now exists as an artist retreat and educational center carrying
45 on Smith's legacy of social justice and activism.

46 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
47 commend Lillian E. Smith for the extraordinary work that she did for the cause of civil rights
48 and honor her distinguished legacy as a trailblazer for social justice.

49 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
50 to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to the family of
51 Lillian E. Smith.