
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 421 Session of
2013

INTRODUCED BY V. BROWN, COHEN, READSHAW, O'NEILL, HENNESSEY,
CRUZ, PARKER, MILLARD, D. MILLER, BROWNLEE, MIRABITO,
CALTAGIRONE, FABRIZIO, QUINN, GOODMAN, DENLINGER, MAJOR,
MURT, KORTZ AND BRADFORD, AUGUST 29, 2013

INTRODUCED AS NONCONTROVERSIAL RESOLUTION UNDER RULE 35,
AUGUST 29, 2013

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring the life and legacy of pioneering public servant, civil
2 rights activist and legendary stateswoman, Tennessee State
3 Representative Lois DeBerry, and expressing condolences on
4 her passing on July 28, 2013.

5 WHEREAS, Tennessee State Representative Lois DeBerry, who
6 served with great distinction in the Tennessee State Legislature
7 for more than 40 years, passed away on July 28, 2013, at 68
8 years of age, after succumbing to a protracted battle with
9 cancer; and

10 WHEREAS, Born on May 5, 1945, Ms. DeBerry grew up in Memphis,
11 Tennessee, and graduated from Hamilton High School in 1962; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1971, Ms. DeBerry graduated from Lemoyne-Owen
13 College with a bachelor of arts degree in elementary education;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, Ms. DeBerry was a civil rights activist who was
16 motivated to seek public office to make a positive difference in
17 the lives of underserved and powerless citizens; and

1 WHEREAS, In 1972, Ms. DeBerry was first elected to the
2 Tennessee House of Representatives at 27 years of age to
3 represent the 91st Legislative District, which includes part of
4 the City of Memphis, in Shelby County; and

5 WHEREAS, During her tenure in the Tennessee House of
6 Representatives, Representative DeBerry was a true champion of
7 civil rights and fought passionately to ensure that the needs of
8 all citizens were represented; and

9 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry was a passionate, outspoken
10 maverick politician who was instrumental in revolutionizing the
11 political culture and dynamics of Tennessee politics; and

12 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry was a committed advocate for
13 children, women, college students, the elderly and the
14 underserved, and was a tireless advocate for her community; and

15 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry provided strong and effective
16 leadership on issues affecting all of the citizens of Tennessee,
17 including healthcare, education, corrections oversight and
18 economic development; and

19 WHEREAS, Throughout her distinguished career in public
20 service, Representative DeBerry was known for her kind, generous
21 and warm personality, and she selflessly served her fellow
22 Tennesseans with wit, charm and an engaging sense of humor; and

23 WHEREAS, Customarily referred to as "Lady D," Representative
24 DeBerry was highly respected and trusted by members of both
25 sides of the aisle, as well as by the seven Tennessee governors
26 who served during her tenure, having been one of her state's
27 most powerful political leaders; and

28 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry provided wisdom and advice to
29 innumerable public officials, and was a friend, mentor and role
30 model to newly elected representatives with whom she served; and

1 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry was an adept communicator,
2 who worked well with everyone and could compromise when needed,
3 which served the vital needs of the citizens of Tennessee in
4 forging effective solutions and common-sense public policy; and

5 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry exemplified the term
6 "community servant," having respectfully refused multiple
7 opportunities to seek higher office, noting that she loved her
8 Memphis constituents and wished to finish the work she started;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry was a pioneering public
11 servant, having been the first African-American female elected
12 to the Tennessee State Legislature from the City of Memphis and
13 Shelby County, and the second statewide; and

14 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry was the first woman
15 chairperson of the Shelby County Delegation to the Tennessee
16 State Legislature; and

17 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry was a founding member and
18 President Emeritus of the National Black Caucus of State
19 Legislators and was the founder and chairperson of the Annual
20 Legislative Retreat of the Tennessee Black Caucus of State
21 Legislators; and

22 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry was the first female Speaker
23 Pro Tempore of the Tennessee House of Representatives, holding
24 that esteemed position from 1987 to 2011, and the second African
25 American to serve in that capacity; and

26 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry was the longest serving
27 member of the Tennessee House of Representatives and the second
28 longest serving member of the Tennessee General Assembly; and

29 WHEREAS, Representative DeBerry was a dedicated public
30 official who walked in honor and humility, and her legendary,

1 decades-long career in public service has garnered the respect
2 of all who knew her, earning her the description of a true
3 Tennessee stateswoman; and

4 WHEREAS, In her five-year battle with disease, Representative
5 DeBerry characteristically demonstrated courage, graciousness, a
6 positive attitude, unwavering determination and resilience and a
7 remarkable spirit that inspired everyone around her; and

8 WHEREAS, Representative Lois DeBerry's extensive influence in
9 her community and state, and in the lives of countless
10 individuals, will be felt for generations to come; therefore be
11 it

12 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives honor the life
13 and legacy of pioneering public servant, civil rights activist
14 and legendary stateswoman, Tennessee State Representative Lois
15 DeBerry, and express condolences on her passing on July 28,
16 2013.