

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 29

By DeBerry

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor Reverend William "Bill" Owens, founder of the Coalition of African-American Pastors.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this General Assembly recognize those venerable religious leaders who, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, enrich the lives of the people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such religious leader is Reverend William "Bill" Owens, the founder and president of the Coalition of African-American Pastors (CAAP); and

WHEREAS, a native Memphian, Reverend Owens graduated from Tennessee State University with a degree in education; after teaching at elementary schools in Memphis and Nashville, he moved to Los Angeles to continue his career as an elementary school teacher; and

WHEREAS, though he never abandoned his commitment to education and the need to foster achievement in children, Reverend Bill Owens was soon driven to enter the ministry and the business sector; and

WHEREAS, a trailblazer, his early days in business were marked by firsts: he was the first African American to hold a management position at Chevrolet's Van Nuys assembly plant and the first African American to own a used car dealership in Memphis; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Owens answered the call to ministry by attending Oral Roberts University (ORU) to study theology and counseling. While at ORU, he began a nonprofit organization to help African-American students gain admission to the school; his efforts led ORU's African-American enrollment to increase from 5 percent to 22.5 percent in four years.

Additionally, he raised more than two million dollars in scholarships for deserving inner-city students; and

WHEREAS, in 2001, in an effort to understand problems inherent in the education system and to give back to his hometown, Reverend Bill Owens enrolled at Christian Brothers University, earning a Master of Education from the institution in 2004; he is a member of Kappa Delta Pi, the international honor society in education; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, Reverend Owens founded CAAP, a grass-roots movement of Christians who are dedicated to Christ-centered and traditional family values; under Reverend Owens's direction, CAAP became known for its fearless defense of family, marriage, and religious freedom; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Bill Owens travels extensively to speak about his core values; he also serves as a consultant to many political campaigns, candidates, and organizations; and

WHEREAS, often sought for his opinion and guidance, Reverend Owens has been a guest on many national talk shows, including those of Fox's Megyn Kelly, Neil Cavuto, and Lou Dobbs, as well as CNN's Carol Costello; he has also been featured in numerous local and national publications; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Owens is blessed with the love of his wife, Dr. Deborah De Sousa Owens, who heads CAAP's education department and women's ministry; he is the proud father of eight children and the doting grandfather of thirteen grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career as a religious leader and humble servant of God, Reverend Bill Owens has demonstrated his ability to lead and counsel others in the way of traditional Christian values, and it is fitting that we recognize him; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby commend and honor Reverend William "Bill" Owens for his work with the Coalition of African-American Pastors and extend to him our best wishes for his continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.