

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 54

By Brooks H

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Dr. Helen James on the occasion of her retirement from the Office of Legal Services of the General Assembly.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this General Assembly should pay special tribute to those estimable legislative employees whose commitment to excellence and dedication to public service have brought untold benefits to the citizens of the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, one such estimable person is Dr. Helen James, who recently took her much-deserved retirement after a distinguished legal career with the Office of Legal Services of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, a career state employee with over thirty years of service after teaching at both the secondary and college level, Dr. James served as the senior staff attorney for the Senate Education Committee, the House Education Administration and Planning Committee, the House Education Instruction and Programs Committee, the House Education Administration and Planning Subcommittee, and the House Education Instruction and Programs Subcommittee at the time of her retirement; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure with the General Assembly, she also served as the senior attorney for the K-12 Subcommittee, the Higher Education Subcommittee, and the Joint Oversight Committee on Education, in addition to having served as a second chair attorney on both the House and Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committees; and

WHEREAS, respected and admired by her colleagues and the members of this body, Dr. James is the authority on the Tennessee Lottery Scholarship Program, having drafted all enabling legislation and nearly all of the statutory revisions since its inception; and

WHEREAS, handling the extensive legal work for the General Assembly during the special session on education in 2010, Dr. Helen James put to the test her herculean work ethic, dedication to detail, and remarkable legal mind as this body enacted a comprehensive overhaul of its education statutes, both K-12 and higher education; and

WHEREAS, during that special session, Dr. James led the assigned legislative legal staff, oversaw all drafted legislation, drafted major amendments, and assisted sponsoring legislators, committee members, and legislative staff; and

WHEREAS, her efforts helped the State of Tennessee make major changes in education policy in numerous areas, leading to an ambitious and innovative Race to the Top proposal that proved to be a winner, as a grant of over \$500 million was awarded to benefit the children of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James was often called upon by her colleagues in neighboring states to provide insight into Tennessee's education policies and procedures; she was actively involved in the National Conference of State Legislatures and the Education Commission of the States and participated in a number of regional and national meetings as a member of the Legislative Education Staff Network; and

WHEREAS, respected by her peers across the country, Dr. James received the prestigious Legislative Education Staff Network Recognition Award from the National Conference of State Legislatures for her exceptional service to the General Assembly during the First Extraordinary Session of January 2010; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James was presented the award at the 2010 annual convention of the National Conference of State Legislatures held in Louisville, Kentucky, and was also recognized in Portland, Oregon, for this honor by Governor Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota at the annual meeting of the Education Commission of the States; and

WHEREAS, a longtime resident of Nashville, Dr. Helen James is a graduate of David Lipscomb University and holds a Master of Arts, a Doctor of Philosophy in Mathematics, and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from Vanderbilt University; and

WHEREAS, Dr. James is an extremely giving citizen who is compelled to reach out with compassion to those whom life has treated unkindly; she epitomizes the ideal of the consummate professional, dedicated public servant, and reliable friend and neighbor; and

WHEREAS, a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother, Helen James enjoys the love and companionship of her husband, Jim Bob, their son, Mike, and especially her two grandchildren, Tanner and Sophia; and

WHEREAS, clearly deserving of the respect, admiration, and commendation of this General Assembly, Dr. Helen James has distinguished herself as a public servant of the highest order and should be specially recognized on this special occasion; 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 honor Dr. Helen James and extend to her our deepest appreciation for her meritorious service to the State of Tennessee and express our endless gratitude for what she has meant, both professionally and personally, to so many members and staff with whom she has worked over the years. We give her our heartfelt wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement and every continued success in her future endeavors.

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