

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 536

By Camper

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory and bountiful life of
Speaker Pro Tempore Emeritus Lois M.
DeBerry.

WHEREAS, Tate County, Mississippi of decades ago was a microcosm of many such areas in the South, home to proud, hardworking people who were linked to the land, their farms, their families, and their faith; the ministers of those times were respected, loved, and honored for the ability to lead a people through hard times, and they offered a strong presence, preaching a message of faith and hope; and

WHEREAS, such a minister was Reverend Franklin DeBerry, as he and his flock from Hickory Grove Baptist Church and other congregations gathered each Sunday in worship and praise; services were times when people came from surrounding areas, traveling in cars, wagons, and on foot; they worshiped together, broke bread together, and held close to each other to share, protect, and renew their ties with God and the world; fortunately, that old-time religion of long-ago Tate County was not lost to Reverend DeBerry's generations to come, and his faith, held strong by his belief in the teachings of the Bible, was passed on to his children, and in time, to their children; and

WHEREAS, each of Reverend DeBerry's many grandchildren grew in grace; one young girl, Lois Marie, the daughter of Samuel and Mary, realized early that her place in this world would not only be directed by her childhood teachings, but by the legacy that her grandfather so wisely handed down; "I am my brother's keeper" rang in her ears, and very early she understood the meaning of service to mankind; she attended schools in her South Memphis community and later earned her degree in Education from LeMoyne-Owen College in 1971; young Lois set upon her career as an educator with ambition and commitment; and

WHEREAS, Lois M. DeBerry's early activity in civil rights in Memphis and elsewhere opened her eyes to the need for justice and equality for all; there was work to be done, and in 1972, she ran for a seat in the Tennessee House of Representatives; no other African-American woman from the City of Memphis had held a seat in the state legislature, and her successful campaign energized a generation of young citizens; her election began a legacy that involved community interaction, youth participation, women rights activism, and minority representation and involvement among civic, religious, social, and fraternal organizations; and

WHEREAS, upon her swearing-in in 1973, Lois DeBerry set about making her presence and her mission known; she took interest in education, public health, and children issues, and later, her committee work took her across the state, listening to citizens from all walks of life and helping fellow representatives formulate policies that would affect all Tennesseans; her years of service saw the beginning of new health and educational policies, the creation of new state departments, and the growth of the state economy; and

WHEREAS, from 1973 to 2013, Lois DeBerry served House District 91 without interruption; the victor in each election, she met the needs of her constituents as best she could, understanding that their needs reflected the needs of most Tennesseans: a quality education for their children, good public services, protection, and fair and equitable policies; and

WHEREAS, she instituted annual retreats for young students to introduce them to the responsibilities of citizenship; she held many positions of leadership with national organizations, which gave honor to Tennessee and a position of prominence among other states; her national exposure lifted the causes of women and minorities everywhere, and her travels across the country allowed her to bring back to Tennessee new ideas, new energy, and a new dedication to making things better for all; and

WHEREAS, although she has passed on to a far better existence, the work of Lois M. DeBerry is not finished, and her legacy and its impact will continue through many and diverse arenas; women will continue to follow in her footsteps and service in Tennessee and across the country; the position of Speaker Pro Tempore Emeritus will be awarded to the next person,

male or female, who will possess some of the leadership and visionary qualities she personified; the Lois DeBerry Special Needs Facility will continue to bear her name and meet the mental and physical health needs of those who are incarcerated; organizations will create special awards, scholarships, and positions of distinction in her name; the many awards, trophies, designations, and accolades that she received will fill the hallways and rooms of her beloved spouse, Charles Traughber, her son and daughter-in-law, Michael and Carlyn Boyer Jr., and her grandsons, Matthew and Carmichael; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we, her bereaved colleagues, hereby honor the memory and bountiful life of Speaker Pro Tempore Emeritus Lois M. DeBerry, reflecting fondly upon her indelible legacy of love, faith, dedication, and public service.

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