

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 361

By Akbari

A RESOLUTION to recognize Dr. Tonea Stewart, keynote speaker of the 2019 12 Most Outstanding Women ceremony.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should salute those citizens who, through their extraordinary efforts, have distinguished themselves as community leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy individual is Dr. Tonea Stewart, who is the keynote speaker of this year's 12 Most Outstanding Women ceremony, hosted by the Memphis Inter-Denominational (MID) Fellowship, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, a native of Greenwood, Mississippi, Dr. Stewart has called Montgomery, Alabama, home since 1990; she is a professional actress, play director, national museum exhibit director, and tenured professor and dean of the College of Visual & Performing Arts at Alabama State University; and

WHEREAS, highly trained in her craft, Dr. Tonea Stewart holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Speech and Theatre from Jackson State University and a Master of Arts degree in Theatre Arts from the University of California at Santa Barbara; she completed her Ph.D. in Theatre Arts at Florida State University (FSU) in 1989, thereby becoming the first African-American woman to receive a doctorate from the FSU School of Theatre and the first McKnight Doctoral Fellow in Theatre Arts; during her time at FSU, she also received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities; and

WHEREAS, her acting career began in 1969, when she became the first African American to direct and star in a leading role on stage at New Stage Theatre, the most

prestigious equity theatre in Mississippi; Dr. Tonea Stewart is perhaps best known for her recurring role of Miss Etta Kibbee in *In the Heat of the Night*, and

WHEREAS, Dr. Stewart earned an NAACP Image Award nomination for her role in the film adaptation of John Grisham's *A Time to Kill* and a New York World Festival Gold Medal Award for the narration of Public Radio International's series *Remembering Slavery*. Her screen and television credits include appearances in *Mississippi Burning*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers III*, *Memphis Beat*, *Matlock*, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *ER*, *Touched by an Angel*, and several Lifetime movies, among others; and

WHEREAS, since Dr. Stewart joined Alabama State University as dean of the College of Visual & Performing Arts, the number of theatre majors, minors, and graduates have soared; the Department of Theatre and Arts received the 2013 Best Fine Arts Program Award from HBCU Digest, and seventy-five percent of theatre graduates have received full scholarships to major graduate universities; and

WHEREAS, dedicated to giving back to her community, Dr. Tonea Stewart has served as spokesperson for "One Church, One Child" of Alabama and for NOSAP, a Texas-based organization aimed at youth development; she was inducted into the National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame and holds honorary doctorates from Buena Vista University, Jarvis Christian College, Talladega College, and Tuskegee University; and

WHEREAS, her many awards include the 1999 Gabriel Award, 2008 Disney Theo Award, 2011 NBTF Living Legend Award, and the 2013 "I Am A Man Award" from the April 4<sup>th</sup> Foundation; she was a 2000 Emmy Award Honoree and a 2009 Operation Push Honoree; and

WHEREAS, throughout her many accomplishments, Dr. Stewart has been blessed with the love and support of her husband, Dr. Allen Stewart, and her three children and five grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that we honor Dr. Stewart at this time; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we welcome Dr. Tonea Stewart to Tennessee, where she will share the

successes of fellow accomplished women at the Memphis Inter-Denominational Fellowship, Inc.'s annual salute to the 12 Most Outstanding Women.

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