

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 526

By Oliver

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Clarice Phelps.

WHEREAS, the Volunteer State is proud to be the home of a number of historic, pioneering women, including the awe-inspiring Clarice Phelps, an eminent research scientist who was the first African-American woman involved in the discovery of an element on the periodic table, which is now known as Tennessine (Ts); and

WHEREAS, in 2010, Mrs. Phelps began working for the Nuclear Security and Isotope Technology Division at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, where she was a part of the research team that helped to purify the Isotope, Bk-249, that would be used to confirm the discovery of element 117, Tennessine, on the periodic table; and

WHEREAS, born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Clarice Phelps was raised in Nashville and graduated from Tennessee State University, from which she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry; she later received her Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering with a focus on Nuclear and Radiation Engineering from the University of Texas, and is completing a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Nuclear Engineering at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, after her time at Tennessee State University, Mrs. Phelps proudly joined the United States Navy and served in the Nuclear Power Program, helping to maintain the chemistry and radiological controls of two reactor plants onboard the aircraft carrier USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76) for the carrier's first two deployments to the Middle East; and

WHEREAS, after receiving her honorable discharge from the Navy, she was employed by Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) in 2009, where she worked as a Nuclear Operations

Technician at the Radiochemical Engineering Development Center processing and purifying mainline radioisotopes for use in industry, private sector, and various government agencies; and

WHEREAS, a member of ORNL's African American Resource Council, Mrs. Phelps has shared her technical expertise to the Plutonium 238 program for NASA and currently serves as the principal investigator for the Radiation Signature Training Devices in the Radioisotope Production and Development Group at ORNL; and

WHEREAS, she has served as a guest instructor at the Project G.R.A.D. (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) Summer Institute for high school students in STEAM programs at Pellissippi State Community College, and in the past shared her time and talents in support of after-school educational programs at Austin-East Magnet High School; and

WHEREAS, an active part of her community, Clarice Phelps is a board member and vice president of Yo-STEM, working to bring STEM education to underserved communities; the former vice president and program chair of the Knoxville Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; and has volunteered at Knox County Career Fairs for middle school students, Science Expos, and traveling science fairs sponsored by ORNL; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to honors and accolades, Clarice Phelps has received national recognition for her contributions to the groundbreaking discovery on the periodic table, including being featured by *People* magazine, *AfroTech*, and *Black Enterprise* and interviewed on CNN, NPR, and CBS's *The Talk*; in 2020, she presented a TEDx Talk titled "How I claimed a seat at the Periodic Table," which has garnered more than 37,000 views; and

WHEREAS, she received the 2017 Knoxville YWCA Tribute to Women Award, appeared on the cover of *Minority Engineer Magazine*, and was recognized by the International Union for Pure and Applied Chemistry for the Periodic Table of Young Chemists. She was selected for inclusion in Knoxville's Top 40 under 40 and named a 2021 GEM Fellow, completing her internship at ORNL; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Phelps has also appeared on an episode of *Mission: Unstoppable* with Miranda Lambert; and

WHEREAS, her many professional accomplishments aside, she is most thankful for the love and support of her husband, John, and her three children, Camryn, Jayson, and Jaxon; and

WHEREAS, Clarice Phelps epitomizes the spirit and commitment that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, we find it appropriate to pause in our deliberations to acknowledge and applaud Clarice Phelps on this special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Clarice Phelps during Women's History Month on her many historic contributions to the advancement of science and to the State of Tennessee as we extend our best wishes for much continued success in all 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 and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.