

Chapter No. 2219

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***SENATE
CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
No. 648***

Originated in Senate

Jenna W. Guynes

Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 648

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REMEMBERING THE LEGACY OF MISSISSIPPI CIVIL RIGHTS PIONEER MYRLIE EVERS-WILLIAMS.

WHEREAS, as Mississippi celebrates Black History Month, it is altogether appropriate that we recognize the important legacy of Mississippi Civil Rights Pioneer and influential leader Myrlie Evers-Williams of Los Angeles, California; and

WHEREAS, a native of Vicksburg, Mississippi (born March 17, 1933), Ms. Evers-Williams was an honor student at Alcorn A & M College, Lorman, Mississippi. Two years later, she and another outstanding student, Medgar Evers, were married and moved to historic Mound Bayou, Mississippi, where they embarked on business careers with Magnolia Mutual Life Insurance Company. Business responsibilities demanded extensive travel in the Delta where they witnessed the burden of poverty and injustice imposed on their people. Determined to make positive changes in that society, both Medgar and Myrlie opened and managed the first NAACP Mississippi State Office. They lived under constant threats as they worked for voting rights, economic stability, fair housing, equal education, equal justice and dignity; and

WHEREAS, a true pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement of the 50s and 60s, Medgar Evers was assassinated on June 12, 1963. Myrlie and their three small children, Darrell Kenyatta (9 years old), Reena Denise (8 years old) and James Van Dyke (3 years old), were witnesses to the murder at the front door of their home in Jackson, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, after witnessing two hung jury trials in the murder of her husband, Ms. Evers-Williams moved her family to Claremont,

California, in July 1964. Although she left Mississippi, she never gave up the fight to bring to justice the murderer of Medgar Evers. In 1994, 31 years later, after persistently expending an enormous amount of faith and energy in her pursuit of justice, she was successful in obtaining enough evidence to reopen the case to a third trial. A victorious case - at which Ms. Evers-Williams was present to witness the verdict of the accused assassin. He was tried and found guilty of murder and died in 2001 in prison; and

WHEREAS, after arriving in California, she became a student at Pomona College, one of the six Claremont Colleges. She received her BA Degree in Sociology in 1968, where, after graduation, she assumed the position of Director, Planning and Development for the Claremont Colleges. She was actively involved in the administration of grants for disadvantaged students. Ms. Evers-Williams also has a Certificate from Simmons College, School of Management, Boston, Massachusetts. In addition, she has received honorary Doctorate degrees from Pomona College, Claremont, California; Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn, New York; Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia; Columbia College, Chicago, Illinois; Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina; and Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure at Pomona, she wrote a book, *FOR US THE LIVING*, that depicts the life of her late husband Medgar and the Civil Rights struggle in Mississippi in the 50s and 60s. Her other literary achievements include Contributing Editor, *Ladies Home Journal*. She was one of the magazine's editors who covered the Vietnam Peace Talks in Paris, France. Her many articles received wide acclaim; and

WHEREAS, always an activist in voter registration campaigns, Ms. Evers-Williams decided to become a candidate for the 24th Congressional District of California in 1970. Her campaign built a strong coalition of people of all ages and races. Even though

this was a time when very few women ran for elective office, Ms. Evers-Williams gained 38% of the vote as the Democratic candidate in a predominately Republican District. She went on to become the first African-American woman to head the Southern California Democratic Women's Division and was convener of the National Women's Political Caucus; and

WHEREAS, setting her sights on corporate America, Ms. Evers-Williams joined a New York firm, Seligman and Latz, Inc. (1973-1975), where she held the position of Vice President for Advertising and Publicity. Job responsibilities took her to all parts of the United States. She was instrumental in establishing a social responsibility policy for the company. Ms. Evers-Williams' professional career took her to the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO), one of the top 15 companies of the *Fortune 500*. There, she served as the National Director for Community Affairs and was responsible for the development and management of all corporate programs. Ms. Evers-Williams was later promoted to the position of Director, Consumer Affairs, ARCO; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Evers-Williams felt the voice of politics calling once again. Appointed to the Los Angeles Board of Public Works by Mayor Tom Bradley, Ms. Evers-Williams was confirmed by the Los Angeles City Council as the first African-American woman to serve as a Commissioner on the Board of Public Works on June 12, 1997 - 24 years to the day of her late husband's death. This full-time position was responsible for the management of 6,000 employees consisting of the Bureaus of Sanitation, Street Maintenance, Street Lighting, Contract Administration, Engineering, Accounting, Management Employee Services and Motion Picture Coordination; managing an operating budget of approximately \$400 Million; and overseeing approximately \$500 Million worth of construction contracts let by the city.

Commissioner Evers-Williams and the Public Works Department are on

the cutting edge of finding solutions to problems that all major cities and some smaller ones are facing today - wastewater, solid waste, reduction of trash, recycling, closing of landfills, air quality, and, indeed, improving the quality of life for all; and

WHEREAS, determined to continue as an active participant in her struggle for justice and equality, Ms. Evers-Williams lectures extensively before Civil Rights groups, women's organizations, social groups, universities and corporations. Her role model to young people has encouraged many to pursue careers in law, education and social services; and

WHEREAS, for her continuous involvement with community and civic concerns, she has been honored with commendations from governors and mayors across the country. Included among the many honors and awards: Congressional Black Caucus; 1996 Delta Sigma Theta-Mary Church Terrell Award (Highest Honor); 1995 Woman of the Year, Glamour-dedication to Civil Rights; 1995 *LIFE Magazine*-seeing the Future in the Past, portrait by Harry Benson; 1995 Woman of the Year, *Mississippi Magazine*, Special Issue-Commitment To Revitalizing The Nation's Oldest Civil Rights Organization; "Women of the Year"-The Most Unforgettable Women of 1995, *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1996; Portrait, *The New Yorker Magazine*, "Black in America," April/May 1996. In the best seller, "*I Dream A World: Black Women Who Changed America*," Ms. Evers-Williams states that she "greeted today and the future with open arms." This credo has carried her through years of struggle and success; and

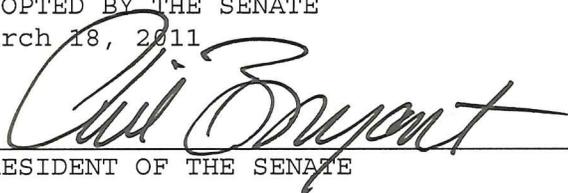
WHEREAS, Myrlie Evers-Williams was married for 18 years to Walter Edward Williams, himself a Civil Rights activist until his death, which was 2 days after she was elected Chairman of the Board of the NAACP. Her children and grandchildren remain her strongest supporters in her continued fight to secure equal rights for all people, and to preserve those rights for future generations; and

WHEREAS, Myrlie Evers-Williams saw the Civil Rights Movement as a Christian movement teaching love, liberation and equality for all under the law, and it is appropriate that we acknowledge the contributions and commitment of this nationally known leader:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That as a part of "Black History Month," we do hereby remember the historic legacy and civic leadership of Mississippi Civil Rights Pioneer Myrlie Evers-Williams and acknowledge her contributions to the history of the State of Mississippi.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to Myrlie Evers-Williams and be made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
March 18, 2011


PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
March 23, 2011


SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES