

Senate Resolution 981

By: Senator Ragan of the 11th

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Honoring Wessie Connell; and for other purposes.
- 2 WHEREAS, Wessie Connell was inducted as a Georgia Woman of Achievement on March
3 28, 2002; and
- 4 WHEREAS, from 1915 through 1987, she lived her entire life in Cairo, Georgia, where she
5 was affectionately known as "Miss Wessie"; and
- 6 WHEREAS, she is remembered by the citizens of Cairo for her fierce determination to teach
7 young people an appreciation of the pleasure of reading, having become Cairo's first
8 librarian in 1939 under the Depression inspired Works Progress Administration program; and
- 9 WHEREAS, she started her library in a room of the town's fire department with only 110
10 books and turned to storytelling to keep children interested in reading while she waited for
11 books to be returned; and
- 12 WHEREAS, schoolrooms, businesses, general stores, and filling stations became "branch
13 libraries," and she urged African American families to keep small collections of books
14 available in their homes for loan since segregation precluded their routine use of the library;
15 and
- 16 WHEREAS, she was the pioneer of the outreach approach to libraries that has now become
17 standard in the United States; and
- 18 WHEREAS, her awards were numerous, beginning with the very first "Citizen of the Year"
19 award in 1948 from the Kiwanis Club of Cairo, and included being designated as a "Top
20 Flight Woman" from the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Georgia in 1952, the
21 "Woman of the Year" by the Grady County Civic Clubs in 1960, and the "Award of Merit"
22 from the Garden Clubs of Georgia in 1961; and

1 WHEREAS, Miss Wessie's fierce resolve for a new library was finally realized in 1964
2 when the Roddenberys donated a substantial sum to build the "Roddenberry Memorial
3 Library"; and

4 WHEREAS, Miss Wessie's dedicated work made a tremendous difference in Cairo and in
5 this country. This visionary and extraordinary lady brought the world to children and adults,
6 and for her dedication, innovative methods, and consistent determination to bring the joy of
7 reading to her community through the development of a first class library system, Wessie
8 Connell has been honored as a Georgia Woman of Achievement.

9 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
10 honor Wessie Connell's distinction as a Georgia Woman of Achievement and remember her
11 as a dynamic woman whose aspirations benefited all the citizens of this state.

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
13 to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the family of Wessie Connell.