

House Resolution 422

By: Representatives Murphy of the 120th, Thomas of the 55th, Williams of the 165th, Smyre of the 132nd, Watson of the 91st, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing and honoring the life and achievements of Mr. Ossie Davis; and for other
2 purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Mr. Ossie Davis, the oldest of five children of a self-taught railroad engineer,
4 was born in Cogdell, Georgia, and grew up in nearby Waycross and Valdosta; and

5 WHEREAS, this native son went on to become one of the most celebrated African American
6 actors in history; and

7 WHEREAS, one year after graduating in the top 5 percent of his high school class with an
8 already burgeoning interest in theater, Mr. Davis headed to Washington, D.C., with his year's
9 savings and a National Youth Administration scholarship to attend Howard University; and

10 WHEREAS, he moved to New York City to try his talents on the stage, and, in 1939, he
11 became involved with the Rose McClendon Players in Harlem where he met some of the
12 most influential African Americans of his time; and

13 WHEREAS, he served his country with honor and courage during World War II as a surgical
14 technician in an Army hospital in Liberia, treating both wounded troops and local inhabitants
15 as well as writing and performing in shows for the troops; and

16 WHEREAS, he made his Broadway debut in *Jeb*, a play about a returning soldier, and met
17 the actress Ruby Dee, whom he married in 1948; and

18 WHEREAS, together they became leading activists in the civil rights era, serving as masters
19 of ceremonies for the historic 1963 March on Washington, defending black voting rights, and
20 lending their powerful voices in support of sickle cell disease research; and

1 WHEREAS, he delivered powerful eulogies at the funerals of both Dr. Martin Luther King,
2 Jr., and Malcolm X, eloquently expressing the sentiments of so many during these tragic
3 moments in his moving baritone voice; and

4 WHEREAS, his acting career was distinguished for roles dealing with racial injustice on the
5 stage and the screen, and he was a strong advocate for African Americans in the
6 entertainment industry; and

7 WHEREAS, his eminent career as a writer and producer included such works as *Purlie*
8 *Victorious*, a satire addressing the historical and psychological significance of segregation,
9 *Countdown at Kusini*, the first American feature film shot entirely in Africa by black
10 professionals, and his first feature film as a director, the box office hit, *Cotton Comes to*
11 *Harlem*; and

12 WHEREAS, Mr. Davis worked throughout his life to establish a legacy of freedom and
13 social justice for the youth of Georgia and this great nation; and

14 WHEREAS, the month of February is set aside as a time to reflect upon and celebrate the
15 leading figures in black history.

16 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
17 the members of this body join in honoring the life of Mr. Ossie Davis, celebrated actor,
18 writer, and director, determined civil rights activist, and distinguished Georgian and
19 recognize his many significant contributions to this state and the nation.

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
21 and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the family of Mr. Ossie
22 Davis.