

House Resolution 1109

By: Representative Jamieson of the 28<sup>th</sup>

### A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring the life and lifetime achievements of the late Governor Samuel Ernest Vandiver,  
2 Jr., and dedicating the Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Jr., Interchange; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, on July 3, 1918, in the northeast Georgia community of Canon, near Lavonia,  
4 Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Jr., was born to Samuel Ernest and Vanna Bowers Vandiver; and

5 WHEREAS, he attended the University of Georgia where he was president of five student  
6 organizations, receiving his bachelor's degree in 1940 and his law degree in 1942; and

7 WHEREAS, he served his country with great honor and pride in the Army Air Force during  
8 World War II and was assigned as defense counsel for the Air Force in Arizona and, later,  
9 as a legal adviser to individual airmen; and

10 WHEREAS, he was elected as mayor of Lavonia in 1945, was appointed as adjutant general  
11 of Georgia under Governor Herman Talmadge's administration in 1948, and was elected as  
12 lieutenant governor in 1954; and

13 WHEREAS, in one of the most remarkable gubernatorial election landslides in recent  
14 Georgia history, he carried 156 counties, 400 county unit votes, and 499,477 popular votes  
15 compared to his two opponents' total of 120,929 votes; and

16 WHEREAS, when he first came to office as governor in 1959 amid a spending scandal, he  
17 immediately ordered most state departments and agencies to cut expenditures by 10 percent,  
18 implemented efficient business practices, and appointed capable directors to the most  
19 troubled departments, exposing and eliminating corruption within the government's executive  
20 branch; and

1 WHEREAS, Governor Vandiver addressed the General Assembly in 1961 to announce that  
2 a campaign platform position he had taken was ill-timed, ill-advised, and not in the best  
3 interest of many qualified Georgians who sought admission to the University of Georgia; and

4 WHEREAS, because of the Governor's recognition that the flagship university of the state's  
5 system should be opened to students of all races, nationalities, and stations in life, he  
6 therefore desegregated the University of Georgia; and

7 WHEREAS, the university was integrated with none of the vicious riots and fatalities  
8 associated with integration of universities in other parts of the Deep South; and

9 WHEREAS, as *Toccoa Record* publisher Tom Law opined, "Vandiver's gutsy decision also  
10 paved the way for relatively peaceful racial relations in Georgia throughout the tumultuous  
11 1960's. Although he didn't benefit from the decision, Georgia certainly did ..."; and

12 WHEREAS, upon learning of the stunning abuses suffered by the mentally ill at the  
13 Milledgeville State Hospital and personally touring the facility with his wife, he launched an  
14 investigation which led to the legislature's approval of \$11 million for new facilities and  
15 paved the way for sweeping reforms in mental health services and programs; and

16 WHEREAS, under his tenure, construction began on the state Archives Building, which  
17 opened in 1965, preserving records in a state where 49 courthouses had burned until being  
18 replaced in the 1990's; and

19 WHEREAS, with great foresight and wisdom, he purchased Colonels Island near Brunswick,  
20 which now serves as a valuable shipping port; and

21 WHEREAS, as a private citizen, he chaired the 1963 Rapid Transit Committee of 100, which  
22 helped to successfully lobby for a commuter train network, now MARTA, in metro Atlanta;  
23 and

24 WHEREAS, upon his death in February, 2005, memorial accolades poured forth to  
25 remember Governor S. Ernest Vandiver, Jr., including lines from *The Atlanta*  
26 *Journal-Constitution* "if a single figure can be said to demarcate the end of Old Georgia and  
27 the beginning of the New, it was former Governor Ernest Vandiver, Jr."; and

1 WHEREAS, Governor Vandiver was eulogized in his beloved First Baptist Church of  
2 Lavonia by the honorable former Attorney General of the United States, Griffin Bell, who  
3 said "Ernie Vandiver was a great Southerner. He rose above being a political leader and  
4 became a statesman ..."; and

5 WHEREAS, the State of Georgia mourns the loss of this monumental statesman whose  
6 steadfast leadership and great personal strength guided the citizens of this state through  
7 trying times with great dignity and moral integrity.

8 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
9 GEORGIA that the members of this body join together to express their deepest regret at the  
10 passing of former Governor Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Jr., and extend their most sincere  
11 condolences to his family.

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the interchange located at Interstate 85 Exit No. 173 in  
13 the City of Lavonia and Franklin County is dedicated as the Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Jr.,  
14 Interchange, and the Department of Transportation is authorized and directed to place and  
15 maintain appropriate signs so dedicating the interchange.

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized  
17 and directed to transmit appropriate copies of this resolution to the family of the late  
18 Governor Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Jr., and the Department of Transportation.