

House Resolution 1661 (COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE)

By: Representative Hatfield of the 177th

A RESOLUTION

1 Dedicating certain portions of the state highway system; to provide for related matters; and
2 for other purposes.

3 **PART I**

4 WHEREAS, Herschel Stokes was born on June 13, 1934; and

5 WHEREAS, he was educated in the Charlton County School System and graduated from
6 Georgia Military College and the University of Georgia with a bachelor's degree in business
7 administration; and

8 WHEREAS, he married Jean Prescott on June 10, 1956, and they had two children, a son,
9 Noah, and a daughter, Stacey, and six wonderful grandchildren; and

10 WHEREAS, he was drafted into the United States Army in December, 1956; and

11 WHEREAS, Herschel was active in many arenas: he started the BEL-MED Recreation
12 Association in Orange Park, Florida; he was an avid fisherman and a Georgia Bulldog fan;
13 he was associated with the Toledo Manufacturing Timber Company in Charlton County; he
14 served two terms on the Folkston City Council; and he was instrumental in bringing the
15 D. Ray James Correctional Facility to Folkston; and

16 WHEREAS, he was the key person in pushing for the construction of the overpass on SR
17 23/121 because he felt it was not safe for emergency vehicles to have to wait on trains to pass
18 through town before they could get to the scene of an emergency or return to a hospital; and

19 WHEREAS, he was a determined person and once he committed to a project he did not stop
20 until it was completed; his goal was not recognition but making Charlton County a better
21 place to live; and

1 WHEREAS, the state lost a distinguished citizen when Herschel was killed in an automobile
2 wreck on October 25, 2003; and

3 WHEREAS, it is only fitting that the overpass he worked so hard for to improve emergency
4 services in Folkston and Charlton County should be named in his memory.

5 **PART II**

6 WHEREAS, the Okefenokee is a vast bog inside a huge, saucer shaped depression that was
7 once part of the ocean floor. Peat deposits, up to 15 feet thick, cover much of the swamp
8 floor. These deposits are so unstable in spots that one can cause trees and surrounding bushes
9 to tremble by stomping the surface. In fact, Okefenokee is a European rendition of the Indian
10 words meaning "land of the trembling earth"; and

11 WHEREAS, the slow-moving waters of the Okefenokee are tea-colored from the tannic acid
12 released by decaying vegetation. The principal outlet of the swamp, the Suwannee River,
13 originates in the heart of the Okefenokee and drains southwest into the Gulf of Mexico. The
14 swamp's southeastern drainage to the Atlantic Ocean is the St. Mary's River, which forms
15 the boundary between Georgia and Florida; and

16 WHEREAS, the swamp contains numerous islands and lakes, along with vast areas of
17 nonforested terrain. Prairies cover about 60,000 acres of the swamp. Once forested, these
18 expanses of marsh were created during periods of severe drought when fires burned out
19 vegetation and the top layers of peat. The prairies harbor a variety of wading birds: herons,
20 egrets, ibises, cranes, and bitterns; and

21 WHEREAS, the swamp remains one of the oldest and most well-preserved fresh-water areas
22 in America. In all, the swamp covers an area of 38 miles north to south and 25 miles east to
23 west; and

24 WHEREAS, the swamp is a vital part of the cultural heritage of this state and an important
25 part of the local economy in that it attracts tourists from all over the world.

26 **PART III**

27 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
28 GEORGIA that the overpass bridge on SR 23/SR 121 located near their junction with US
29 1/US 23, in the City of Folkston, in Charlton County, is dedicated as the Herschel Stokes
30 Memorial Overpass.

- 1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Okefenokee Trail is dedicated as follows:
- 2 (1) That portion of State Route 38/U.S. Highway 84 from Valdosta to Waycross;
 - 3 (2) State Route 4/U.S. Highway 1/23 from Waycross to its juncture with State Route
4 23/U.S. Highway 301;
 - 5 (3) State Route 23/U.S. Highway 301 from the junction with State Route 4/U.S.
6 Highway 23 to Folkston;
 - 7 (4) State Route 177 from its junction with State Route 4/U.S. Highway 23 to
8 Okefenokee;
 - 9 (5) State Route 40 from Folkston to Kingsland;
 - 10 (6) State Route 121 from Folkston to the Florida border;
 - 11 (7) State Route 89/U.S. Highway 441 from Homerville to Edith;
 - 12 (8) State Route 94 from Edith to the Florida border; and
 - 13 (9) State Route 177 from Fargo to the Stephen C. Foster State Park.

14 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Transportation is authorized and
15 directed to remove signs designating the Okefenokee Parkway and to place and maintain
16 appropriate markers designating the Okefenokee Trail.

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Transportation is authorized and
18 directed to erect and maintain signs identifying the highway facilities dedicated in this
19 resolution.

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 Department of
22 Transportation, the family of Herschel Stokes, and the Folkston City Council.