

Senate Resolution 25

By: Senators Hooks of the 14th, Tolleson of the 20th, Smith of the 52nd, Tarver of the 22nd, Harp of the 29th and others

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Honoring the life and memory of Griffin Boyette Bell; and for other purposes.
- 2 WHEREAS, the Honorable Griffin Boyette Bell was born on October 31, 1918, in Americus,
3 Georgia, and passed away January 5, 2009; and
- 4 WHEREAS, with his passing, the State of Georgia has lost one of her most distinguished
5 public servants, innovative legal minds, and civil rights advocates; and
- 6 WHEREAS, this World War II veteran served in the United States Army from 1941 to 1946,
7 attaining the rank of major during this time; and
- 8 WHEREAS, Judge Bell completed his undergraduate studies at Georgia Southwestern
9 College and went on to graduate cum laude from Mercer University Law School in Macon,
10 Georgia; and
- 11 WHEREAS, after he was admitted to the Georgia Bar in 1947, Judge Bell practiced in
12 Savannah and Rome, Georgia, before joining the Atlanta law firm of King and Spalding in
13 1953, where he rose to the level of managing partner in 1958; and
- 14 WHEREAS, Judge Bell began his career as a public servant in 1959 with his honorary
15 position as Chief of Staff to Georgia Governor Ernest Vandiver, advising the Governor for
16 over two and a half years before being appointed by President John F. Kennedy in October
17 of 1961 to serve as a United States Circuit Judge on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals; and
- 18 WHEREAS, during his 15 years on the federal bench, Judge Bell supervised the creation of
19 dozens of school desegregation plans, playing an integral role in defusing racial tensions of
20 the time and paving the way for peaceful desegregation of public schools in Georgia and
21 other states; and

22 WHEREAS, Judge Bell's integrity, professionalism, and sharp legal mind were qualities his
23 childhood neighbor President Jimmy Carter admired, and in 1976, the President nominated
24 this great Georgian for the position of Attorney General for the United States; and

25 WHEREAS, on January 26, 1977, Griffin B. Bell was sworn in as the 72nd United States
26 Attorney General by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger; and

27 WHEREAS, during his tenure as Attorney General, Judge Bell helped rehabilitate the United
28 States Justice Department's severely damaged reputation which was caused by the Watergate
29 scandal of the early 1970's; and

30 WHEREAS, after the conclusion of his term as United States Attorney General, this dean of
31 Georgia lawyers continued his remarkable legal career specializing in conducting internal,
32 page-turning investigations for corporations in legal distress such as E.F. Hutton, after its
33 financial scandal; Exxon, after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska; and Dow Corning, after
34 the company's silicone implants were linked to health risks; and

35 WHEREAS, one of the most important Georgians of the 20th century, Judge Bell was known
36 for his integrity, professionalism, sense of humor, and charm; and

37 WHEREAS, the State of Georgia mourns the loss of this trusted and enduring public figure,
38 a principled statesman and strong defender of the First Amendment with the gift of
39 persuasion and an instinct for politics.

40 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
41 join to honor the life and achievements of the Honorable Griffin B. Bell, express their
42 deepest regret at his passing, and extend their most sincere condolences to his family.

43 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
44 to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the family of the Honorable Griffin B.
45 Bell.