

House Resolution 160

By: Representatives Brooks of the 63rd, Smyre of the 132nd, Lucas of the 139th, Randall of the 138th, Jones of the 44th, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Celebrating the life and work of Mr. James Edward "Billy" McKinney; and for other
2 purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Mr. James Edward "Billy" McKinney was born to the late Ann Lewis in
4 Atlanta, Georgia, and he was raised by his loving grandmother, Annie Bell Dixon; and

5 WHEREAS, Mr. McKinney joined the United States Army in 1945, and upon his return to
6 Georgia from the European war theatre, while still wearing his United States Army uniform,
7 he was arrested for drinking from the "White Only" water fountain; and

8 WHEREAS, he grew up to become a socially and politically conscious young man; always
9 fighting for justice and equality and this mind-set led him to join the Atlanta Police
10 Department in 1947; and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. McKinney was one of the first black policemen in the City of Atlanta and
12 he often reflected on walking the streets of Atlanta being allowed to police only "colored"
13 folk, since black policemen were not allowed to arrest white people; and

14 WHEREAS, in order to point out this injustice he formed a one-man protest, picketing the
15 Atlanta Police Department headquarters on his off days, often in his police uniform, and
16 much to the ire of his fellow officers; and

17 WHEREAS, in his younger days, Mr. McKinney was an avid tennis player and also spent
18 a lot of time reading and researching, turning himself into a "walking encyclopedia;" and his
19 unique view of the world sometimes found him at odds with so-called conventional wisdom,
20 but he was true to his principles, regardless; and

21 WHEREAS, it was on his Grady Hospital police beat that he met his loving wife of 56 years,
22 Leola Christior McKinney and to this union, was born a daughter, Cynthia Ann McKinney;
23 Mr. McKinney also had 2 sons, Gregory and James, from a previous marriage; and

24 WHEREAS, he made a conscious decision that picketing from the outside was not as
25 effective as being on the inside as a part of the law-making body, helping to make laws that
26 made sense, and in 1970, was elected to the Georgia State Legislature after the passage of
27 the 1965 Voting Rights Act mandated election law changes in the State of Georgia; and

28 WHEREAS, in 1989, his daughter was also elected to the State Legislature and he and
29 Cynthia served as the first father-daughter team of lawmakers in Georgia's history; and

30 WHEREAS, Mr. McKinney served as an elected official in the state where he was born and
31 raised for more than 30 years and in tribute to his service, a stretch of Interstate 285, from
32 1-20 to the Cobb County line, is named in his honor; and

33 WHEREAS, he was one of the forgotten Civil Rights advocates and activists and his political
34 prowess was recognized across the nation and the world, and his advice and counsel were
35 sought from elected officials and candidates for elected office near and far.

36 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
37 the members of this body join in honoring the life and memory of Mr. James Edward "Billy"
38 McKinney and express their deepest and most sincere regret at his passing.

39 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
40 and directed to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the family of Mr. James
41 Edward "Billy" McKinney.