

Senate Resolution 755

By: Senator Jones of the 10th

#### A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Henry County Board of Education to preserve the historical nature of  
2 Smith-Barnes Elementary School; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Smith-Barnes Elementary School, located in the City of Stockbridge in Henry  
4 County, Georgia, has a rich history dating back to when it originally opened its doors in the  
5 fall of 1955; and

6 WHEREAS, Smith-Barnes Elementary School was initially constructed to replace  
7 Stockbridge Rosenwald School, which was one of thousands of schools built in the rural  
8 South in the early part of the twentieth century to educate young African Americans; and

9 WHEREAS, such primary schools were built with funding from the Julius Rosenwald  
10 Foundation, whose namesake was one of the early presidents of Sears & Roebuck; and

11 WHEREAS, Julius Rosenwald took particular interest in the plight of African Americans,  
12 and his charity committed large sums of money for the construction of schools in poor, rural,  
13 and primarily African American school districts in 15 Southern states; and

14 WHEREAS, Rosenwald schools were cooperatively built, with donations of land and labor  
15 by the local African American communities being matched by financial contributions from  
16 the Rosenwald Foundation; and

17 WHEREAS, Smith-Barnes Elementary School sits partially on land that was donated by Mr.  
18 Leonard Smith, an African American leader in the Stockbridge, Henry County, Georgia,  
19 community at that time; and

20 WHEREAS, Leonard Smith's wife had been the principal of Stockbridge Rosenwald School;  
21 and

22 WHEREAS, Smith-Barnes Elementary School takes its name from the Smith family and the  
23 name of its first principal, Ms. Rena Barnes; and

24 WHEREAS, the descendants of Leonard Smith are Henry County citizens and still live in  
25 close proximity to Smith-Barnes Elementary School; and

26 WHEREAS, Smith-Barnes Elementary School may be the only elementary school in Henry  
27 County named after African American community leaders; and

28 WHEREAS, based on this history, Smith-Barnes Elementary School is a historical asset in  
29 Henry County; and

30 WHEREAS, over the years, Smith-Barnes Elementary School has educated students of all  
31 races in Henry County and has received and continues to receive recognition for the  
32 academic achievements of its student body; and

33 WHEREAS, in 1996, the school was completely renovated with more classrooms and the  
34 latest technological facilities; and

35 WHEREAS, Smith-Barnes Elementary School demonstrates a warm and caring climate  
36 towards its students and faculty, as is reflected in its low faculty turnover and widespread  
37 parental involvement; and

38 WHEREAS, the Henry County Board of Education is proposing to close Smith-Barnes  
39 Elementary School and reopen the school as an alternative school; and

40 WHEREAS, the Henry County Board of Commissioners and the mayor and city council of  
41 the City of Stockbridge have recognized the importance of the school, particularly to the  
42 African American community, and have adopted resolutions opposing the closure of  
43 Smith-Barnes Elementary School and the repurposing of the school as an alternative school.

44 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that this body urges the Henry  
45 County Board of Education to preserve the historical nature of Smith-Barnes Elementary  
46 School and appropriately respond to community concerns about its potential closure.

47 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed  
48 to transmit an appropriate copy of this resolution to the Henry County Board of Education.