

Senate Resolution 369

By: Senators James of the 35th, Tate of the 38th, Seay of the 34th, Butler of the 55th, Jackson of the 2nd and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing and commending Senator Leroy Reginald Johnson as part of "Living Black
2 History"; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Senator Leroy Reginald Johnson was born on July 28, 1928, in Atlanta, and he
4 earned his bachelor's degree from Morehouse College, his master's degree from Atlanta
5 University, and his law degree from North Carolina Central University; and

6 WHEREAS, after receiving his law degree, Senator Johnson became the first African
7 American hired by the Fulton County solicitor-general's office and worked as a criminal
8 investigator there from 1957 to 1962; and

9 WHEREAS, in October, 1960, in one of Atlanta's first civil rights demonstrations, black
10 college students conducted mass sit-ins at Rich's Department Store lunch counters; Senator
11 Johnson was one of several community leaders, including Jesse Hill and Whitney Young,
12 advising the student leaders, who included Julian Bond; and

13 WHEREAS, Georgia's county unit system of allocating seats in the General Assembly was
14 overturned in a historic "one man, one vote" court decision in 1962, resulting in the creation
15 of a predominantly black Senate district in Fulton County; and Senator Johnson won the seat
16 in 1962, making him the first African American to serve in the legislature since 1907 and the
17 first African American elected to public office in the Southeast in 1962; and

18 WHEREAS, employees in the segregated state cafeteria balked at serving food to Senator
19 Johnson during his first year, but he persevered and became an influential lawmaker, rising
20 to the position of chairman of the powerful Judiciary Committee; and

21 WHEREAS, in 1966, Senator Johnson was personally involved in a national controversy
22 involving newly elected legislator Julian Bond who, days before he was to be sworn into
23 office in January, 1966, endorsed statements by John Lewis, chairman of the Student

24 Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, denouncing United States intervention in the Vietnam
25 War and supporting those who avoided the draft; this stance enraged legislative leadership,
26 and they moved to deny Bond his seat in the House of Representatives; during a hearing held
27 by a specially appointed house committee, Senator Johnson was among those who testified
28 on Bond's behalf; and

29 WHEREAS, Senator Johnson was a candidate in the historic 1973 mayoral race, was
30 well-known among voters, and had the endorsement of the *Atlanta Constitution*; Mayor
31 Maynard Jackson won the race, becoming Atlanta's first African American mayor; and

32 WHEREAS, Senator Johnson's portrait was hung in the state capitol near the Senate
33 chamber, and during the 2000 legislative session, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution
34 renaming a portion of Fulton Industrial Boulevard as Leroy Johnson-Fulton Industrial
35 Boulevard; and

36 WHEREAS, he is united in love and marriage to Cleopatra Whittington and is blessed with
37 a remarkable son, Michael Vince Johnson; and

38 WHEREAS, it is abundantly fitting and proper that the outstanding accomplishments of this
39 remarkable and distinguished Georgian be appropriately recognized.

40 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
41 commend Senator Leroy Reginald Johnson for his many years of efficient, effective,
42 unselfish, and dedicated public service to the State of Georgia and recognize him as part of
43 "Living Black History."

44 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
45 to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to Senator Leroy
46 Reginald Johnson.