

## Senate Resolution 379

By: Senators Orrock of the 36th, Tate of the 38th, Henson of the 41st, Butler of the 55th, Fort of the 39th and others

## A RESOLUTION

- 1 Honoring the life and memory of Reverend Dr. Joseph L. Roberts; and for other purposes.
- 2 WHEREAS, the State of Georgia mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished spiritual  
3 and civic leaders with the passing of Reverend Dr. Joseph L. Roberts on February 15, 2015;  
4 and
- 5 WHEREAS, Reverend Roberts was born on February 17, 1935, in Chicago, Illinois; and
- 6 WHEREAS, he attended Chicago Public Schools, graduated cum laude from Knoxville  
7 College, obtained his Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary, and  
8 earned his Master of Theology degree from Princeton Theological Seminary; and
- 9 WHEREAS, a man of deep and abiding faith, Reverend Roberts became the senior pastor of  
10 the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, where he served for a total of 30  
11 years, having received the mantle of leadership from the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr.,  
12 and
- 13 WHEREAS, his work at Ebenezer Baptist Church, both as a preacher and as a civic leader,  
14 is known throughout the country; and
- 15 WHEREAS, Reverend Roberts understood and manifested the importance of Dr. Martin  
16 Luther King, Jr.'s "beloved community" and at the same time decried the "sleepy  
17 indifference" of far too many people to the problems around them; and
- 18 WHEREAS, Reverend Roberts worked tirelessly from the pulpit, in the community, and  
19 through legislative channels to fight human sex trafficking; and

20 WHEREAS, Reverend Roberts' ministry was deliberately an activist one, and he notably  
21 shared the lamentable truth that "we spend more money to lock a person up than to set a  
22 person free"; and

23 WHEREAS, he led Ebenezer Baptist Church in funding and building the notable Horizon  
24 Sanctuary as its new home and in launching an extensive community outreach program that  
25 included the Teenage Mother's Ministry, tutoring and counseling programs, a food co-op, and  
26 an older adult day care center; and

27 WHEREAS, in 2004, Reverend Roberts was a recipient of distinguished alumni awards from  
28 Union Theological Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary; and

29 WHEREAS, in 2006, he published *Sideswiped by Eternity: Sermons from Ebenezer Baptist*  
30 *Church*, an acclaimed collection of memorable inspirational messages delivered from his  
31 pulpit, demonstrating his inspired vision as an outstanding faith leader in our times; and

32 WHEREAS, Reverend Roberts was united in love and marriage to Esther and was blessed  
33 with one beloved son, two cherished daughters, and six wonderful grandchildren; and

34 WHEREAS, a compassionate and generous man, Reverend Dr. Joseph L. Roberts will long  
35 be remembered for his large heart, his keen intellect, his mastery of the teachings of the  
36 Gospel and their meaning in today's world, his unswerving commitment to the battle for  
37 social justice, and his dedication to his own family, to the Ebenezer family, and to our  
38 common humanity.

39 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body  
40 join in honoring the life and memory of the Reverend Dr. Joseph L. Roberts and express their  
41 deepest and most sincere regret as his passing.

42 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed  
43 to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the family of  
44 Reverend Dr. Joseph L. Roberts.