

House Resolution 615

By: Representatives Abrams of the 89th, Oliver of the 82nd, Willard of the 51st, Evans of the 42nd, Stephenson of the 90th, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Commending and recognizing Stephen B. Bright on serving for 35 years at the Southern
2 Center for Human Rights; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Stephen B. Bright served as president and senior counsel of the Southern Center
4 for Human Rights (SCHR) since 2006 and previously served as director of SCHR from 1982
5 through 2005; and

6 WHEREAS, SCHR is an Atlanta based nonprofit law firm dedicated to providing legal
7 representation to people facing the death penalty, challenging human rights violations in
8 prisons and jails, improving legal representation for poor people accused of crimes through
9 litigation and advocacy, and advocating for criminal justice reform on behalf of those
10 affected by the system in the Southern United States; and

11 WHEREAS, Stephen B. Bright has trained and inspired hundreds of students and public
12 interest lawyers for nearly 25 years at various institutions, including Yale Law School,
13 Harvard University, Georgetown University, the Georgia State University College of Law,
14 Emory University, the University of Georgia, and the University of Tennessee; and

15 WHEREAS, the issue areas of his litigation, teaching, and writing include capital
16 punishment, legal representation for poor people accused of crimes, conditions and practices
17 in prisons and jails, racial discrimination in the criminal justice system, judicial
18 independence, and sentencing; and

19 WHEREAS, he has tried cases, including those where the state was seeking the death
20 penalty, before dozens of juries and advocated the rights of clients before state and federal
21 appellate courts; he has argued three cases before the United States Supreme Court, *Foster*
22 *v. Chatman*, 136 S.Ct. 1737 (2016), *Snyder v. Louisiana*, 552 U.S. 472 (2008), and *Amadeo*
23 *v. Zant*, 486 U.S. 214 (1988), and in each case, the death sentences were reversed because
24 the Court found racial discrimination in the selection of the juries; and

25 WHEREAS, his and SCHR's work are the subject of a documentary film, *Fighting for Life*
26 *in the Death Belt*, (EM Productions 2005), and two books, *Proximity to Death* by William
27 McFeely (Norton 1999) and *Finding Life on Death Row* by Kayta Lezin (Northeastern
28 University Press 1999); and

29 WHEREAS, he has received numerous awards including the American Bar Association's
30 Thurgood Marshall Award in 1998, the American Civil Liberties Union's Roger Baldwin
31 Medal of Liberty in 1991, the National Legal Aid & Defender Association's Kutak-Dodds
32 Prize in 1992, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers' Lifetime Achievement
33 Award in 2008, several honorary degrees, and other recognitions; and

34 WHEREAS, *The Fulton Daily Law Report*, Georgia's legal newspaper, named him as
35 "Newsmaker (and Agitator) of the Year" in 2003 for his contribution to bringing about
36 creation of a public defender system in Georgia.

37 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
38 the members of this body commend Stephen B. Bright on 35 years at the Southern Center
39 for Human Rights, recognize his legacy of achievement and contributions made to Georgia's
40 legal community, and extend best wishes for continued success in his ongoing efforts to
41 shape future generations of zealous advocates for people trapped in the criminal justice
42 system.

43 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
44 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to
45 Stephen B. Bright and the Southern Center for Human Rights.