

Senate Resolution 316

By: Senators Orrock of the 36th, Rahman of the 5th, Jordan of the 6th, Halpern of the 39th, Butler of the 55th and others

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Honoring the life and memory of Murphy Davis; and for other purposes.
- 2 WHEREAS, the State of Georgia mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished citizens
3 with the passing of Murphy Davis; and
- 4 WHEREAS, Murphy Davis diligently and conscientiously devoted innumerable hours of her
5 time, talents, and energy toward the betterment of her community and state, as evidenced
6 dramatically by her superlative service as an advocate for the hundreds of homeless on the
7 streets of Atlanta and the 3,392 Americans on death row; and
- 8 WHEREAS, after receiving an education at Mary Baldwin College in the Shenandoah Valley
9 of Virginia, she joined the Staunton, Virginia, NAACP and found a place in the civil rights
10 movement before protesting the Vietnam War; and
- 11 WHEREAS, in the early 1970s, she joined a group of women studying theology at the
12 Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, which set the groundwork for her
13 eventual position as a pastor in the Presbyterian Church; and

14 WHEREAS, while pursuing a PhD in religious history at Emory University, she decided that
15 the program was too removed from the human and civil rights struggles of the 1970s; and

16 WHEREAS, she was awarded a fellowship to pursue a doctorate in church history and
17 women's studies in recognition of her critical thinking prowess and excellence in the
18 classroom, but when the United States Supreme Court upheld Georgia's capital punishment
19 law in 1976, she became a full-time activist to overturn it; and

20 WHEREAS, she initiated a local grassroots anti-death penalty movement and met with
21 mothers of inmates on Georgia's death row, eventually establishing herself as a regular visitor
22 of death row inmates; and

23 WHEREAS, for her advocacy work for death row inmates, she has been described as
24 someone who has spent more time in jails and prisons than most people who have never been
25 convicted of a crime; and

26 WHEREAS, working with her husband, Ed Loring, and other activists, she established
27 Atlanta's first overnight homeless shelter in 1979, and in 1981, she founded the Open Door
28 Community, a 60 room apartment building purchased with the Atlanta Presbytery for
29 housing the homeless; and

30 WHEREAS, the Open Door Community now includes educational and outreach initiatives
31 alongside various programs that bring college students and other members of the greater
32 Atlanta community to Open Door to work and learn; and

33 WHEREAS, to help Atlanta's poorest populations, she and her husband organized protests
34 that won concessions from the City of Atlanta and resulted in the city's public hospital
35 reversing its plans to impose a co-pay on its poorest patients; and

36 WHEREAS, she has earned distinction for advocacy excellence, including a 1991 fellowship
37 from the Petra Foundation, which recognizes the work of unsung heroes for social justice, and
38 she is listed among Robert Shetterly's *Americans Who Tell The Truth*; and

39 WHEREAS, despite being struck by Burkitt's lymphoma, a virulent and aggressive form of
40 non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, she continued her work to assist the less fortunate, which serves
41 as a testament to her tenacity and solidarity with the homeless and the poor; and

42 WHEREAS, in 1998, she returned to the hospital and was given the spectacular news that
43 she had been cured; and

44 WHEREAS, she was a person of magnanimous strengths with an unimpeachable reputation
45 for integrity, intelligence, fairness, and kindness, and by the example she made of her life,
46 she made this world a better place in which to live; and

47 WHEREAS, Murphy Davis served with honor and distinction as a social justice advocate,
48 and her vision and unyielding commitment to ensuring death row inmates and the homeless
49 are treated with respect and are seen as individuals are sorely missed; and

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

52 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
53 join in honoring the life and memory of Murphy Davis and express their deepest and most
54 sincere regret at her passing.

55 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
56 to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to the family of
57 Murphy Davis.