

Senate Resolution 145

By: Senators Watson of the 1st, Jackson of the 2nd, McNeill of the 3rd, Hickman of the 4th and Harper of the 7th

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring the life and memory of Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West; 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 Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West on January 17, 2021, which was her 108th
4 birthday; and

5 WHEREAS, Sandy was born on January 17, 1913, in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, a beloved
6 daughter of Dr. Henry Torrey and Nell Ford Torrey; and

7 WHEREAS, Sandy became a part-time coastal Georgia resident in 1917, spending winters
8 with her family at Greenwich Plantation near Thunderbolt, Georgia; and

9 WHEREAS, in 1924, her parents purchased Ossabaw Island, Georgia's third largest barrier
10 island that includes 26,000 unspoiled acres of forest, wetlands, and beaches, which was
11 inherited by Sandy and her late brother's children in 1959; and

12 WHEREAS, in 1961, she and her husband, Clifford, began the Ossabaw Island Project for
13 established creatives, the first of several innovative interdisciplinary programs that were
14 designed to share Ossabaw Island while also preserving it for future generations; and

15 WHEREAS, in 1970, she launched a program called Genesis, a semi-sustainable
16 back-to-the-land program that she described as "a training ground for environmental
17 awareness"; and

18 WHEREAS, from 1961 to 1983, Sandy used her own funds to host thousands of people on
19 Ossabaw Island through the Ossabaw Island Project, Genesis, and her Research & Public
20 Education program; and

21 WHEREAS, activities under her leadership included ecology, photography, physics,
22 painting, linguistics, archaeology, writing, history, and more, and island guests included
23 Eugene Odum, Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, Ralph Ellison, H. W. Janson, Celestine
24 Sibley, Harry Bertoia, Ivan Bailey, Margaret Atwood, Annie Dillard, and Philip Greear; and

25 WHEREAS, at the same time, Sandy was a groundbreaking advocate for the conservation
26 of Georgia's coast as a convener of the Conference on the Future of the Marshlands and
27 Islands of Georgia, held at Sea Island in October 1968, which led to the passage of the
28 "Coastal Marshlands Protection Act" in 1970; and

29 WHEREAS, facing financial pressure from property taxes, Sandy led her family to negotiate
30 with the State of Georgia for the purchase of Ossabaw Island, designating it as Georgia's first
31 Heritage Preserve under the "Heritage Trust Act of 1975" and guaranteeing that it can never
32 be subdivided, sold, or developed and that it must be used solely for natural, scientific, and
33 cultural study; research and education; and environmentally sound preservation,
34 conservation, and management of the island's ecosystem; and

35 WHEREAS, in 1978, Sandy and her family officially sold Ossabaw Island to the State of
36 Georgia for half of its appraised value and continued to hold a life estate residency for 23

37 acres and operate programs on Ossabaw Island through an agreement with the State of
38 Georgia, finally moving off the island in 2016; and

39 WHEREAS, a compassionate and generous woman, Sandy will long be remembered for her
40 love of family, friendship, and community and will be missed by all who had the great
41 fortune of knowing her.

42 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
43 join in honoring the life and memory of Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West and express their
44 deepest and most sincere regret at her passing.

45 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
46 to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to the family of
47 Eleanor "Sandy" Torrey West.