

House Resolution 988

By: Representatives Jackson of the 165th, Westbrook of the 163rd, Stephens of the 164th, Gilliard of the 162nd, and Hitchens of the 161st

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing and commending *The Savannah Tribune*; and for other purposes.

2 WHEREAS, during the years between the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the
3 beginning of the Reconstruction Era in 1865, three Savannah African American civic and
4 business leaders, John H. DeVeaux, Louis B. Toomer, Sr., and Louis M. Pleasant, took
5 advantage of this brief period of opportunities for African Americans in the South,
6 recognizing the need for a newspaper dedicated to covering news and issues related to the
7 African-American community of Savannah; and

8 WHEREAS, despite facing an unfavorable environment of segregation and resistance from
9 white citizens with policies designed to block black progress, DeVeaux, Toomer, and
10 Pleasant moved forward with personal resources from DeVeaux, who was born in 1848 to
11 a free black family, to finance the establishment of *The Colored Tribune* in 1875, renamed
12 *The Savannah Tribune* in 1876, for the stated purpose of defending "the rights of the colored
13 people and their elevation to the highest plane of citizenship;" and

14 WHEREAS, *The Tribune*, one of the first African American-owned and operated newspapers
15 in the United States, was published until 1878, when forced to close because white printers
16 in the city refusing to produce the newspaper; and

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17 WHEREAS, DeVeaux and R.W. White founded The Tribune Publishing Company with its
18 own printing plant and reopened *The Savannah Tribune* in 1886, with DeVeaux serving as
19 editor until 1889, when he was appointed as Collector of Customs, and relocated to
20 Brunswick, Georgia, after which Savannah businessman, Soloman "Sol" C. Johnson,
21 assumed editorship and upon DeVeaux's death in 1909 became owner of *The Tribune*; and

22 WHEREAS, under Sol Johnson's editorship, *The Tribune* served as the only print source in
23 south Georgia and north Florida for news about race riots and the injustices of the Jim Crow
24 era such as lynchings and the lack of educational opportunities that were imposed upon
25 blacks; and

26 WHEREAS, upon the death of Sol C. Johnson in 1954, his Goddaughter, Willa Ayers
27 Johnson, who worked as secretary at *The Tribune*, assumed ownership and published *The*
28 *Tribune* until September 1960, when it closed its doors; and

29 WHEREAS, *The Savannah Tribune* was re-established in 1973, by banker Robert E. James,
30 who was owner and publisher until 1983, when his wife, Shirley Barber James, a community
31 leader and university educator, became the publisher and sole owner; and

32 WHEREAS, with the exception of hiatuses from 1878 to 1886, and 1960 to 1973, *The*
33 *Savannah Tribune* has operated continuously, even in the wake of a devastating fire in
34 January 2006, when the local journalism community rallied around *The Tribune* such that it
35 was able to continue the proud tradition of not missing a publication date since its rebirth in
36 1973.

37 NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
38 the members of this body recognize The Savannah Tribune as a beacon in journalism,

39 celebrate 150 years as a valued Savannah tradition on June 28, 2025, and commend its
40 continuing proud legacy of championing causes that uplift African Americans locally,
41 regionally, and nationally through print and digital media.

42

43 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
44 and directed to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to
45 Shirley Barber James, publisher of *The Savannah Tribune*.