

Senate Resolution 586

By: Senators James of the 28th, Kemp of the 38th, Jackson of the 41st and Sims of the 12th

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Otha E. Thornton, Jr., as an outstanding citizen of the
2 state of Georgia as well as for a lifetime of service in defense and education; and for other
3 purposes.

4 WHEREAS, the Georgia General Assembly recognizes the extraordinary contributions of
5 citizens whose leadership, service, and accomplishments bring honor and distinction to the
6 State of Georgia; and

7 WHEREAS, Otha E. Thornton, Jr., an eighth-generation Georgian born in Elberton, Georgia,
8 is a son of this state who exemplifies the highest ideals of duty, academic achievement, and
9 public service; and

10 WHEREAS, Dr. Thornton earned a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies from Morehouse
11 College, a Master of Science in Rhetoric and Technical Communication from Michigan
12 Technological University, and was later awarded an honorary doctorate from that same
13 institution, and currently completing a Doctorate in Executive Leadership from University
14 of Charleston, West Virginia, demonstrating a profound commitment to lifelong learning;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, in a distinguished and highly decorated twenty-year career in the United States
17 Army, Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Thornton served with honor in critical intelligence and
18 national security roles, including assignments within the National Security Agency and as
19 a military intelligence and security commander, where his expertise was vital to the nation's
20 efforts in the war on terror and drug wars; and

21 WHEREAS, he was selected for consecutive, high-trust assignments with the White House
22 Communications Agency, serving as the J1 director and a presidential communications
23 officer during the administrations of Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama,
24 ensuring the continuity and security of national command communications; and

25 WHEREAS, his exceptional leadership was further demonstrated in his deployment to
26 Baghdad, Iraq, where he served as the United States Forces Iraq Chief of Personnel for the
27 entire Iraqi Theater, bearing the immense responsibility for the accountability, safety, and
28 movement of over 250,000 service members and civilians operating in combat zones; and

29 WHEREAS, his operational purview also extended to ensuring the full accountability of a
30 major subordinate unit deployed to Afghanistan, a critical task supporting the broader theater
31 mission; and

32 WHEREAS, in this command role, his duties encompassed the solemn responsibility for
33 casualty management operations and responding to official congressional inquiries, requiring
34 the utmost precision, compassion, and dedication; and

35 WHEREAS, in this pivotal role, his strategic oversight was integral to the transition of
36 military operations to the Iraqi government and the successful execution of national elections

37 in 2009-2010, for which he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for exceptional performance
38 in combat operations; and

39 WHEREAS, for his exemplary service across the military intelligence discipline, he was
40 honored with the prestigious Knowlton Award, one of the highest recognitions in America's
41 intelligence community; and

42 WHEREAS, transitioning from a life of military service to one of advocacy, Dr. Thornton
43 made history as the first African-American male president and chairman of the board of the
44 National Parent Teacher Association, guiding an organization representing millions of
45 families across the United States; and

46 WHEREAS, in this pivotal role as the 53rd national president, his leadership was
47 instrumental in the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act, working with Congress and
48 the U.S. Department of Education to shape this foundational law that now governs the United
49 States public education system and benefits Georgia's 1.8 million public school students; and

50 WHEREAS, his influence and expertise in shaping future generations have been recognized
51 nationally, including his selection by Ebony Magazine in 2013 as one of the Most Influential
52 Blacks in America and his role as a judge for Warren Buffett's Secret Millionaire Club,
53 where he helped evaluate young entrepreneurs and promote financial literacy; and

54 WHEREAS, his profound dedication to the youth of his hometown is evidenced by his
55 service as the executive director of Elberton's Promise, a mentoring program guiding students
56 at Elberton County High School toward academic success and future opportunity; and

57 WHEREAS, his civic engagement extends to his active membership in the Renaissance
58 Church of Christ, the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated, the West Central Georgia
59 Black Chamber of Commerce, and his life membership in the National Eagle Scout
60 Association, and Morehouse College National Alumni Association and 1600
61 Communications Association reflecting decades of mentorship and community building.

62 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
63 recognize Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Otha E. Thornton, Jr., as an outstanding citizen of the
64 state of Georgia for his lifetime of service, leadership, and advocacy, and commended his
65 exemplary contributions that have strengthened our nation's security and enriched the
66 educational future of our children.

67 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
68 to make an appropriate copy of this resolution available for distribution to Lieutenant
69 Colonel (Ret.) Otha E. Thornton, Jr.