

Senate Resolution 679

By: Senators Jones of the 10th, Jackson of the 41st, Kemp of the 38th, Wicks of the 34th, Mangham of the 55th and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring the life and memory of Bishop William "Bill" Harris and recognizing February 17,
2 2026, as Bishop William "Bill" Harris Day; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, the State of Georgia mourns the loss of one of its most distinguished citizens
4 with the passing of Bishop William "Bill" Harris on December 9, 2025; and

5 WHEREAS, Bishop William "Bill" Harris was born on February 1, 1943, in Albany,
6 Georgia, a beloved son, husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, community leader,
7 and civil rights activist; and

8 WHEREAS, a man of deep and abiding faith, Bishop William Harris was called to ministry
9 in 1977 and is the founder and retired pastor of Bethel Church Ministries, Inc., in Monroe,
10 Georgia; and

11 WHEREAS, he served as Dean of Ministers for the Northern Diocese for nine years, was
12 appointed State Evangelist for the Northern Diocese Churches of Our Lord Jesus Christ in
13 1993, and was appointed as Chaplain for the Regional 7th District of Alabama and Georgia
14 for the Churches of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc; and

15 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris also served as a field worker for the Student Non-violent
16 Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC),
17 and was a founding member of the Atlanta SCLC chapter; and

18 WHEREAS, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Bishop Harris worked
19 with and marched alongside his friends and fellow civil rights family, the late Dr. Martin
20 Luther King, Jr., Congressman John Lewis, Hosea Williams, Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, and
21 other pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement; and

22 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris is intimately familiar with the struggles, suffering, and injustices
23 endured by the African American people during the 1960s, as he himself was beaten and
24 jailed and had police dogs attack him during the protests; and

25 WHEREAS, he was an original member of The Freedom singers for justice, and went into
26 cities before rallies and marches to inspire protesters and workers through song; and

27 WHEREAS, he was instrumental in the Mississippi March, participated in the Moore's Ford
28 Bridge March, and stood alongside his good friend Rev. Hosea Williams when he led the
29 protests in Bishop Harris's hometown of, Albany, Georgia, to organize the voter registration
30 and desegregation efforts; and

31 WHEREAS, Bishop Harris is one of the co-founders of the Veterans Civil Rights Movement
32 Organization SCLC Atlanta affiliated chapter and was the Chaplin for The Georgia
33 Conference of African American Mayors; and

34 WHEREAS, in the late 60s and early 70s Bishop Harris was a recording artist with Emory
35 and The Dynamics, and performed and toured with such artists as Jerry Butler, Jackie

36 Wilson, Curtis Mayfield, The Impressions, David Ruffin, Little Richard , The Temptations,
37 Mitty Collier, The Jackson 5, and many others; and

38 WHEREAS, up until his earthly transition, Bishop Harris continued to travel around the
39 country speaking to the younger generations, educating them on the history of the civil rights
40 movement and participating in local protests and civil rights activities.

41 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
42 join in honoring the life and memory of Bishop William "Bill" Harris; recognize February
43 17, 2026, as Bishop William "Bill" Harris Day; and express their deepest and most sincere
44 regret at his 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 Bishop William "Bill" Harris.