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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 108

Offered January 13, 2010

*Celebrating the life of John Hope Franklin, revered dean of African American historians.*

Patron—Marsh

WHEREAS, John Hope Franklin, a native of Rentiesville, Oklahoma, and the grandson of slaves, born on January 2, 1915, 50 years after slavery was abolished, was called from labor to reward on March 25, 2009; and

WHEREAS, John Hope Franklin was nurtured by loving parents who instilled in him a love and appreciation for excellence and community service and a passion for learning; his father, after moving the family to Oklahoma because he was denied the right to practice law in Louisiana, became one of the first African American lawyers in the Oklahoma Indian Territory, and his mother was a teacher and community leader; and

WHEREAS, as a child, John Hope Franklin learned the power of words and ideas, and like his father, took up the practice of reading and writing every day, which he continued throughout his lifetime; and

WHEREAS, taught how to survive and thrive during a time of intense racial animus in America, he was introduced to the injustices of racism as a small child who endured the humiliating experience of being ejected from a train with his mother because she refused to move to the segregated compartment, and John Hope Franklin's life experiences in a segregated America left an indelible mark on his soul; and

WHEREAS, he was a stellar student and valedictorian of his graduating class at Booker T. Washington High School in Oklahoma; he was denied admission to the University of Oklahoma because of his race and enrolled at Fisk University in 1931 to study law, but earned a baccalaureate degree in history in 1935 after being persuaded to major in history instead; he earned his master's degree in 1936 and a doctoral degree from Harvard University in 1941; and he later returned to Fisk University as an instructor and taught at St. Augustine's and North Carolina College for Negroes, now North Carolina Central University; and

WHEREAS, during his illustrious professional career, John Hope Franklin served as chairman of the all-white history department at Brooklyn College in 1956, and as a professor at Howard University, the University of Chicago, and Duke University, from which he retired from the history department in 1985, and afterward served for seven years as professor of legal history at the Duke Law School; and

WHEREAS, an insatiable intellectual, a prolific writer, an inspiring teacher, a towering historian, and a distinguished scholar on life in the South and the African American experience in the United States, John Hope Franklin had a fervent commitment to justice and through his published works, most notably, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, now in its seventh edition, and *The Emancipation Proclamation*, and, using his moral authority and meticulous, even-handed scholarship, he illuminated and opened to scrutiny some of the darkest periods in American history to challenge and inspire the nation to probe the causes and remedies of inequality, bigotry, and oppression; and

WHEREAS, he was actively involved in numerous professional and educational organizations, and served as president of the American Studies Association, the Southern Historical Association, the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, the Organization of American Historians, and the American Historical Association; as a member of the Board of Trustees of Fisk University, the Chicago Public Library, and Chicago Symphony and Orchestra Association; and as a member of the board of the Journal of Negro History; and

WHEREAS, John Hope Franklin served on many national commissions and delegations, including the National Council on the Humanities, the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, the President's Advisory Commission on Ambassadorial Appointments, as a United States delegate to the 21st General Conference of UNESCO, as chairman of the advisory board for One America in the 21st Century: The President's Initiative on Race, during the Clinton administration, and testified before Congress on legislation that would provide recompense for survivors of the Tulsa Race Riots of 1921; and among his foreign appointments were Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions at Cambridge University, consultant on American Education in the Soviet Union, Fulbright professor in Australia, and lecturer in American History in the People's Republic of China; and

WHEREAS, he was the recipient of more than 130 honorary degrees, was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award for his vast accomplishments, the nation's highest civilian honor, received the John W. Kluge Award for lifetime achievement in the humanities, and was recognized for his contributions to the humanities by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American

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59 Philosophical Society; and

60 WHEREAS, during the nearly 100 years of his life, John Hope Franklin received numerous honors,  
61 accolades, and awards, and among them are the creation at Duke University of the following: the John  
62 Hope Franklin Collection of African and African American Documentation in the Rare Book,  
63 Manuscript, and Special Collections Library; a portrait hung in Perkins Library; the John Hope Franklin  
64 Center for Interdisciplinary and International Studies; the Franklin Humanities Institute; and an endowed  
65 chair in the Duke Law School, the first African American professor to be so honored; and

66 WHEREAS, his many other awards and recognitions include the election to the Oklahoma Hall of  
67 Fame in 1978, the 1984 Jefferson Medal from the Council for the Advancement and Support of  
68 Education, the Cleanth Brooks Medal of the Fellowship of Southern Writers in 1989, the 1990  
69 Encyclopedia Britannica Gold Medal for the Dissemination of Knowledge, the Charles Frankel Prize for  
70 contributions to the humanities in 1993, the Cosmos Club Award and the Trumpet Award from Turner  
71 Broadcasting Corporation in 1994, the first W.E.B. DuBois Award from the Fisk University Alumni  
72 Association in 1995, the Organization of American Historians' Award for Outstanding Achievement, the  
73 Alpha Phi Alpha Award of Merit, the NAACP's Spingarn Medal, and the Presidential Medal of  
74 Freedom, election to the Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame in 1996, the Peggy V. Helmerich  
75 Distinguished Author Award in 1997, and the PBS documentary on his life in 1997; and

76 WHEREAS, John Hope Franklin was the James B. Duke Professor Emeritus of History at Duke  
77 University, and has been credited with bringing intellectual rigor and an engaged passion to the study of  
78 history, and has been noted for his work as a consultant to Thurgood Marshall on *Brown v. Board of*  
79 *Education*, and for accompanying Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on the march from Selma to  
80 Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965; and

81 WHEREAS, his devotion to his wife was legendary as was his love of orchids; and one orchid was  
82 named in his honor, "Phalaenopsis John Hope Franklin"; and

83 WHEREAS, he was loved dearly and will be sorely missed by his family, friends, and colleagues  
84 who characterized him as kind, elegant, a genuine scholar, a man of impeccable character, "famously  
85 generous and collegial, a tall, impeccably dressed man of courtly mien and old-fashioned manners, and a  
86 Southern gentleman of the old school"; and

87 WHEREAS, it has been said that "his voluminous writings cemented his reputation among  
88 academicians, politicians, and civil rights figures as an inestimable historian" and his memory will be  
89 cherished by all who loved and knew him; and

90 WHEREAS, the nation and the world mourn with deep sorrow the death of John Hope Franklin;  
91 now, therefore, be it

92 RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby  
93 note with great sadness the loss of John Hope Franklin, revered dean of African American historians;  
94 and, be it

95 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for  
96 presentation to the family of John Hope Franklin as an expression of the General Assembly's abiding  
97 respect for his memory and admiration for his many scholarly and humanitarian contributions to the  
98 study of history and education, and his extraordinary service to the nation.