

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 109

Commending Reverend Willie Woodson on his retirement as executive director of Living the Dream, Inc.

Agreed to by the Senate, January 28, 2010

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 12, 2010

WHEREAS, Reverend Willie Woodson, a native of Richmond, earned his bachelor of science degree in business administration from Virginia Union University, a master of divinity degree from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University, a master of arts degree in religious education from the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, and a doctorate in ministry degree from Union-Presbyterian School of Christian Education; and

WHEREAS, as senior pastor of First United Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Reverend Willie Woodson has led the church congregation to develop the missions ministry, "Vision For A Vital Church," to broaden the concept and ministry of Christian Education, to become a tithing church, to support a new approach to evangelism, to begin a Summer Day Camp, to improve the Youth and Children's Ministry, and to initiate plans for a new Community and Education building; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Willie Woodson is devoted to Christian service and ministry, and his many affiliations, interests, and sacrifices attest to his dedication to his calling, as he has served as president of the Richmond Committee of Ecumenical Clergy; and as a member of the Mission Organizational Task Force during the restructuring of the Presbytery of the James, commissioner to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Salt Lake City, on the Search Committee for the General Presbyter of the Presbytery of the James, and on the Redevelopment and Revitalization Committee of the Presbytery of the James; as a supervisor with the Office of Field Education and Placement of Students from Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University; as the past moderator of the Black Caucus of the Presbytery of the James; he facilitated a mission study and developed a day care center for Thyne Memorial Presbyterian Church in Chase City; and served on mission studies in Guatemala and Nicaragua in Central America, as well as in China, Korea, and Ghana, West Africa; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Willie Woodson also expresses his passion for Christian service through his duties as senior pastor and his contributions to the Richmond community, including service as a member of the Richmond Public Schools Strategic Planning Group, the Commission on Architectural Review Board, the Board of Directors of "One To One Mentorship," the Commission on Crime, and as a lifetime member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and chaplain of the Richmond Crusade for Voters; and

WHEREAS, as a dedicated member of the Board of Directors for Boaz and Ruth, an outreach ministry in the urban area, Reverend Woodson demonstrates his commitment to public education and youth development by mentoring students at Henderson Middle School; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Willie Woodson has most recently served as executive director of Living the Dream, Inc., formerly Community Learning Week, a community-based educational program designed to honor the memory and commemorate the accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which was established by the Richmond Committee of Black Clergy and Virginia Union University six years before the signing of legislation by former Governor Charles S. Robb, on April 9, 1984, to establish the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, with the exception of the annual events sponsored by the King Center in Atlanta, Living the Dream, Inc., is one of the original and longest organized events of its kind in the nation to honor the King holiday; and

WHEREAS, since 1978, Living the Dream, Inc., has led the Richmond metropolitan communities in celebrating the King holiday with appropriate year-round commemorative, educational, spiritual, and service-oriented activities, as well as a two-year Youth Leadership Development Program, through which Dr. King's philosophy and principles of the "Beloved Community" can be practiced; and

WHEREAS, the success of annual commemorative events and activities under the auspices of Living the Dream, Inc., cosponsored by more than 125 local businesses, public and private schools, institutions of higher education, and religious and civic organizations, is the result of tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals such as its esteemed leader, Reverend Willie Woodson; and

WHEREAS, under Reverend Willie Woodson's visionary leadership, Living the Dream, Inc., exemplifies the spirit of service and leadership espoused by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and represents a consensus-building force and a multifaceted, interfaith, culturally diverse union devoted to healing, improving, and enhancing the racial climate in the Richmond metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, Justice John Marshall Harlan insightfully wrote, "the destinies of the two races in this

country are indissolubly linked together, and the interests of both require that the common government of all shall not permit the seeds of race hate to be planted under the sanction of law," and it is the profundity of this expression that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., so eloquently articulated during his lifetime and now is fervently championed by Living the Dream, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Willie Woodson is fond of reminding the advocates of racial equality and all people of good will that "though they slew the dreamer, the dream is not dead," and that the work will always be incomplete as long as hatred, anguish, want, bigotry, greed, and intolerance abound; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Willie Woodson retired as executive director of Living the Dream, Inc., in March 2009, after serving with distinction for more than a decade and he is commended for his exemplary service on the occasion of his retirement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend and congratulate Reverend Willie Woodson on his many achievements and outstanding service as executive director of Living the Dream, Inc.; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Reverend Willie Woodson as an expression of the General Assembly's gratitude for his commitment to Christian service, the perpetuation of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the people of this Commonwealth and best wishes for a happy and rewarding retirement.