

12100160D

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 215

Offered March 1, 2012

Celebrating the life of Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee.

Patron—Marsh

WHEREAS, Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee, the son of a tenant farmer, was born on February 21, 1922, near Dugdown Mountain in rural Polk County, Georgia, grew up during the Great Depression, and entered into eternal rest on May 26, 2011; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee, affectionately called "Happy," attended elementary and high school in Polk County; he sold all of his possessions and, with his wife and children, moved from his "three-county world" to seek formal education; he earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy in 1954 from Mercer University and a master of divinity degree in 1957 from Colgate Rochester Divinity School, where he was president of his senior class; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee was ordained to the Gospel ministry in October 1949 in Georgia, and soon thereafter, in July 1950, he was called to pastor Antioch Baptist Church; during his lifetime, he would pastor many other Baptist churches in Georgia, New York, Virginia, and other states; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee worked with numerous local community organizations, including serving as a member of the board of directors and as Executive Director of the Virginia Council of Human Relations; the Virginia State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights; Executive Director of Salisbury-Rowan Community Service Council, Inc.; Chairman of the North Carolina State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights; Vice President for Development at Shaw University; Director of Religious Activities at Mercer University; Deputy Director of Atlanta University's Multi-Purpose Training Center; Assistant to the Dean of the School of Urban Life at Georgia State University; Program Officer with the Southern Regional Council, Inc., in Atlanta; and as consultant to the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare in preparing hospitals throughout the Southeast to comply with Medicare regulations and to several educational, urban, and community programs in North Carolina, Georgia, and other areas; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee changed many of his long-held perspectives after his extensive education and, as a result of his new worldview, he frequently declared that he devoted his entire lifetime to fighting "poverty, racism, and fun DA Mentalism"; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee was very active in the Civil Rights Movement and the desegregation of public schools and public accommodations, such as hotels, theaters, and ball parks in Richmond and other southern cities; he was involved in the reopening of Prince Edward County public schools in 1964, ending five years in which the public schools were closed during the Massive Resistance to the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*; and he worked tirelessly with the Kennedy administration, the Johnson administration, Robert F. Kennedy, Thurgood Marshall, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to implement the policies of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the War on Poverty; and

WHEREAS, on October 9, 2004, Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee was selected as the first non-Indian recipient of the Gandhi Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his human relations work by the Gandhi Foundation of USA, at a ceremony held at the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, at which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once served as pastor; and

WHEREAS, after retiring from a long and distinguished career as a pastor and social activist in 1977, Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee returned to his roots in Polk County, Georgia, to raise cattle, operate a jewelry store, reignite the Polk County Democratic Party in Cedartown, Georgia, and serve as interim pastor for several American Baptist Association churches in Massachusetts, New York, and Utah; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee was blessed with an affable character and quick wit, and he was a natural conciliator with an uncanny ability to put everyone at ease; he was respected and admired by all who knew him; and

WHEREAS, family, friends, parishioners, and colleagues in Virginia and throughout the nation mourn the loss of Reverend Heslip "Happy" Malbert Lee, a generous, committed, and genuine Christian soldier; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby note with great sadness the loss of Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Reverend Heslip Malbert Lee as an expression of the General Assembly's

INTRODUCED

SJ215

59 respect for his memory.