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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 350

Offered February 21, 2014

*Commending Henderson House.*

Patron—Simon

WHEREAS, Henderson House, a historic site and the home of two civil rights pioneers in Falls Church, has been an essential part of the area's cultural heritage for over 100 years; and

WHEREAS, shortly after the end of the Civil War, Charles and Elizabeth Tinner purchased land that would become an important part of the local African American community; and

WHEREAS, members of the Henderson family have owned property in the area since 1864; Dr. Edwin Bancroft Henderson's aunt, Harriet Foote Turner, lived where the Falls Church tobacco barns once stood, on what is now South Maple Avenue; and

WHEREAS, in 1913, E. B. Henderson and his wife, Mary Ellen, built the Henderson House, a model number 225 Sears Kit Home from the 1911 Sears, Roebuck and Company catalog, on property near Tinner Hill; and

WHEREAS, in response to a proposed segregation ordinance, E. B. Henderson and Joseph Tinner founded the Colored Citizens Protective League (CCPL), which was authorized to act as a standing committee of the NAACP; though the ordinance passed, the CCPL saw that it was never fully enforced and was successful in having it nullified after a United States Supreme Court decision in 1917; and

WHEREAS, in 1915, the CCPL became a standing committee of the NAACP and, in 1918, became the first rural branch of the NAACP in the nation; and

WHEREAS, a staunch crusader for civil rights, E. B. Henderson began a 50-year letter-writing campaign that lasted from 1915 to 1965, authoring over 3,000 letters to the editor that were published in the *Washington Post* and other newspapers across the nation; he was also a correspondent for the National Negro Press Association and the author of *The Negro in Sports*, the first scholarly publication that chronicled the history of blacks in sports; and

WHEREAS, the construction of the Lee Highway in 1922 divided the Henderson family's property in half, resulting in the Henderson House being on one side of the highway and the barn on the opposite side; and

WHEREAS, in 1950, the Henderson House was relocated 50 feet north of Lee Highway, while remaining on the original Henderson property; the Hendersons took advantage of new commercial zoning along Lee Highway by building three stores that faced the highway; the stores were sold in the 1980s; and

WHEREAS, Mary Ellen Henderson taught at and was principal of the Falls Church Colored School from 1919 until 1950; in 1919, she began advocating for a new school to replace the overcrowded two-room schoolhouse with no indoor plumbing and only a pot-bellied stove for heat that served black kindergarten through seventh grade students in the area; and

WHEREAS, in 1938, using the Fairfax County Public Schools annual budget, Mary Ellen Henderson authored a disparity study highlighting that, out of each dollar spent on education, 97.4 cents were spent educating white children and 2.6 cents were spent on the education of black children; after the publication of the study, she was able to organize an interracial group of parents, teachers, and community members to join her in successfully advocating for the construction of the James Lee Elementary School, which was built in 1948; and

WHEREAS, Mary Ellen Henderson was the first African American to join the Falls Church League of Women Voters, a founding member of the Women's Democratic Club, and volunteered for 30 years with the Girl Scouts of America; and

WHEREAS, on September 18, 2005, in recognition of her lifelong devotion to gaining access to quality education and facilities for African American children and civil rights for all, a new middle school in Falls Church was named the Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School in her honor; and

WHEREAS, upon earning his physical education certification at Harvard University, E. B. Henderson returned to Washington, D.C., and became the athletic director of Washington, D.C., Public Schools; he was the first to introduce the fundamentals of basketball to African Americans on a wide scale; established the Interscholastic Athletic Association; established the YMCA 12th Streeters, 1910 winners of the Colored Basketball World Championship; formed Howard University's first varsity basketball team; organized competitions between teams along the Mid-Atlantic seaboard through a championship series; and organized the Eastern Board of Officials to train referees and officials, as well as advocate for interracial competitions; and

WHEREAS, on September 8, 2013, Dr. Edwin B. Henderson's pioneering contributions to the sport

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59 of basketball were recognized when he was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of  
60 Fame; and

61 WHEREAS, today, Edwin B. Henderson II and his wife, Nikki, still live in Henderson House and  
62 remain active contributors to the community; in 1997, he founded the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation  
63 (THHF) to preserve the area's cultural heritage; and

64 WHEREAS, in 1999, the City of Falls Church officially repealed the segregation ordinance that E. B.  
65 Henderson and many others had fought against; that same year, the THHF constructed the Tinner Hill  
66 Monument; and

67 WHEREAS, Henderson House was granted a historic designation by the City of Falls Church in  
68 1993, Tinner Hill received a Virginia Historic Marker in 2005, and Henderson House was nominated for  
69 the National Register of Historic Places in 2013; now, therefore, be it

70 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby  
71 commend Henderson House, a beacon for the rich cultural heritage of Falls Church, on the occasion of  
72 the 100th anniversary of its construction in 2013; and, be it

73 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution  
74 for presentation to Nikki Graves Henderson and Edwin B. Henderson II, the owners of Henderson  
75 House, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the storied history the house  
76 represents.