

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 27—SENATORS MATHEWS, AMODEI, CARE, CARLTON, COFFIN, JACOBSEN, JAMES, MCGINNESS, NEAL, O’CONNELL, O’DONNELL, PORTER, RAGGIO, RAWSON, RHOADS, SCHNEIDER, SHAFFER, TITUS, TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON AND WIENER

APRIL 3, 2001

JOINT SPONSORS: ASSEMBLYMEN LESLIE, ANDERSON, ANGLE, ARBERRY, BACHE, BEERS, BERMAN, BROWER, BROWN, BUCKLEY, CARPENTER, CEGAVSKE, CHOWNING, CLABORN, COLLINS, DE BRAGA, DINI, FREEMAN, GIBBONS, GIUNCHIGLIANI, GOLDWATER, GUSTAVSON, HETTRICK, HUMKE, KOIVISTO, LEE, MANENDO, MARVEL, MCCLAIN, MORTENSON, NEIGHBORS, NOLAN, OCEGUERA, OHRENSCHALL, PARKS, PARNELL, PERKINS, PRICE, SMITH, TIFFANY, VON TOBEL AND WILLIAMS

Read and Adopted

SUMMARY—Memorializes distinguished civil rights leader Bertha Woodard. (BDR R-1165)

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EXPLANATION – Matter in *bolded italics* is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION—Memorializing distinguished civil rights leader Bertha Woodard.

- 1 WHEREAS, On September 16, 1999, Nevada lost an exceptional lady
- 2 with a beautiful spirit of giving, Bertha Woodard, who lived with grace and
- 3 dignity, and spent her time on Earth serving others; and
- 4 WHEREAS, Bertha Rosanna Sanford Woodard was born on January 25,
- 5 1916, to Samuel and Lillie Belle Sanford; and
- 6 WHEREAS, Bertha grew up in Pasadena, California, and attended
- 7 Pasadena City College and Washoe Western School of Nursing; and
- 8 WHEREAS, After moving to Reno, Bertha worked as a nurse at Washoe
- 9 Medical Center and served on the State Board of Nursing from 1967 until
- 10 1975, and, when she was not serving others in that capacity, she devoted
- 11 herself to securing equality for minorities in Northern Nevada; and
- 12 WHEREAS, Her pioneering endeavors as a leader for civil rights are
- 13 especially laudable because they came at a time when the City of Reno was
- 14 referred to by some as the “Mississippi of the West,” not because it had a



1 river running through it, but because the phrase made a statement about the
2 social and political attitude toward race that existed in the area at that time;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, In spite of the obstacles she faced, Bertha Woodard
5 organized sit-ins and led picket lines to protest racism in Northern Nevada,
6 and she is acknowledged as the matriarch of the Reno-Sparks chapter of
7 the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP,
8 for which she served as President from 1971 until 1976; and

9 WHEREAS, A favorite reminiscence that reveals the courage and zeal
10 which characterized Bertha Woodard is the charge, in the form of a picket
11 line, that she led in Hawthorne when the only restaurant in town was inside
12 a casino that denied service to persons of color, a charge that eventually
13 caused the casino to change its policy; and

14 WHEREAS, To achieve her goals, Bertha organized the crusade to
15 remove signs from Reno stores that read, "No Indians, Negroes or Dogs"
16 and petitioned the Reno City Council in 1959 to lift a ban on minorities in
17 local casinos when the Olympics were to be held in nearby Squaw Valley;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, Bertha saw her diligent work come to fruition when she was
20 invited in 1961 to attend the signing by Governor Grant Sawyer of the first
21 civil rights bill in the State of Nevada, a bill that established the Nevada
22 Commission on Equal Rights of Citizens, now known as the Nevada Equal
23 Rights Commission; and

24 WHEREAS, The toil and industry of Bertha Woodard were instrumental
25 in fostering the declaration of the Nevada Legislature in that bill which
26 says that it is "the public policy of the State of Nevada to protect the
27 welfare, prosperity, health and peace of all the people of the state . . .
28 without discrimination, distinction or restriction because of race, religious
29 creed, color, national origin or ancestry"; and

30 WHEREAS, In 1981, the University of Nevada, Reno, honored Bertha
31 with the Distinguished Nevadan Award, an honor bestowed only upon
32 those who have contributed in an outstanding manner to this state; and

33 WHEREAS, Friends remember Bertha Woodard's generosity and
34 boundless kindness, as recalled in a story by a former chapter president of
35 the NAACP who tells of a time when he and a friend were unable to find a
36 place to stay when traveling to a civil rights conference until they made a
37 call to Bertha, who soon found them an available room in a motel; and

38 WHEREAS, Shortly before her death, Bertha was in the process of
39 planning a project with a group of students at the University of Nevada,
40 Reno, to compile a comprehensive history of the civil rights movement in
41 Nevada, and true to the African proverb "Each time an elder passes, a
42 library dies," the rich, personal knowledge of Bertha Woodard will be
43 sorely missed on any such project; and

44 WHEREAS, It would be inconceivable to overstate the contributions of
45 Bertha Woodard to the people of this state and impossible to express the
46 depth of gratitude she deserves; now, therefore, be it

47 RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, THE ASSEMBLY
48 CONCURRING, That the members of the Nevada Legislature convey their
49 sympathies and condolences to the family of Bertha Woodard and express



1 their sincerest gratitude and gratefulness for her accomplishments; and be it
2 further

3 RESOLVED, That this body honors the rich legacy Bertha Woodard left
4 to the residents of this state and acknowledges the breaking down of
5 barriers and the dramatic change in racial outlook that were the result of
6 her strength and enthusiasm; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Senate prepare and transmit a copy
8 of this resolution to the family of Bertha Woodard and to the Reno-Sparks
9 chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored
10 People.

