

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 778
By West

A RESOLUTION to recognize the Honorable Adolpho A. Birch, Jr.,
Former Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme
Court, on the occasion of his retirement.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those outstanding citizens and consummate jurists who, in their years of service, have performed with uncommon devotion and enthusiasm; and

WHEREAS, Adolpho A. Birch, Jr., is one such estimable person who has served with distinction for 13 years on the Tennessee Supreme Court, serving as Chief Justice from May, 1996, to July, 1997, thus becoming the first African-American to hold the esteemed position; and

WHEREAS, Justice Birch's noteworthy 43-year career of judicial service includes 19 years of appellate court service in addition to his years on the Tennessee Supreme Court; he is the only judge in Tennessee history to ever serve at each level of the court system – general sessions, trial, intermediate appellate court, and state Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, a native son of Washington, D.C., born on September 22, 1932, Justice Birch is a graduate of Dunbar High School in Washington; he attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania from 1950 to 1952 and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Doctor of Jurisprudence legal degree from Howard University, where he was a member of the Harvard Law Review from 1954 to 1956; and

WHEREAS, as a member of the U.S. Naval Reserve, Justice Birch saw active duty from 1956 to 1958; during the interval of 1958 to 1966 he served as Associate Professor of Legal Medicine at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, lecturer in law at Fisk University and Tennessee State University, and operated a private legal practice; and

WHEREAS, serving as an Assistant Public Defender for Davidson County in 1963, Justice Birch continued in that capacity until 1966 when he was named an Assistant District

Attorney General, a post he held until 1969 when he began his judicial career as a General Sessions Court judge in Davidson County; and

WHEREAS, in 1978, Justice Birch became a Criminal Court judge for Davidson County and served as presiding judge of the Trial Courts of Davidson County from 1981 to 1982; and

WHEREAS, Justice Birch was appointed to the Court of Criminal Appeals in 1987 and was elected to the appellate court in 1988 and re-elected in 1990; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, Governor Ned McWherter appointed Justice Adolpho A. Birch to the Tennessee Supreme Court; he was elected the next year and won re-election to an eight-year term in 1998; and

WHEREAS, a conscientious member of his profession, Justice Birch is a member of the National Bar Association Judicial Council and the Tennessee, Nashville, and Napier-Looby Bar Associations; he is a member of the teaching faculty at the Nashville School of Law, a former member of the Court of the Judiciary from 1983 to 1986, and has served as the University of Memphis Distinguished Jurist in Residence; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades during his extraordinary career, Justice Birch won the National Bar Association's prestigious William H. Hastie Award in 2005, the highest award of the NBA's Judicial Council for excellence in legal and judicial scholarship and commitment to justice; he was also the recipient of the Barbara Jordan Award, the highest award given by the international Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity; and

WHEREAS, in respectful tribute to this esteemed gentleman, the public officials of Davidson County have made the decision to name a new Criminal and General Sessions Court building the "Justice A.A. Birch Building" in his honor; and

WHEREAS, Justice Birch exemplifies the spirit and allegiance to family and community that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; he enjoys the love and support of his family and is the proud parent of three beloved children and a doting grandfather to his treasured grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, throughout his estimable career, Adolpho A. Birch, Jr., has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of his colleagues in the judiciary, Tennessee's legal community, and of the citizenry of this State; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we extend to Chief Justice Adolpho A. Birch, Jr., our profound thanks for the great service he has rendered to this State and our heartfelt wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement and every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.