

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1026

By Fitzhugh

A RESOLUTION recognizing Woodlawn Missionary Baptist Church on the occasion of its 150th anniversary.

WHEREAS, the many fine churches across this State constitute an institutional foundation for an orderly and just society for all Tennesseans, and their dedicated service to God and humanity is the bedrock upon which our State and nation are founded; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this General Assembly should recognize those venerable religious institutions and their congregations that, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such dynamic and historic community of faith is Woodlawn Missionary Baptist Church in Brownsville, whose members will celebrate the church's 150th anniversary and homecoming on Sunday, May 22, 2016; and

WHEREAS, Woodlawn Baptist Church was founded by Reverend Hardin Smith, a newly freed slave, who established the church with a group of freed slaves and members of the white Woodlawn Baptist Church in 1866; and

WHEREAS, although most slave congregations were ministered by white pastors, Hardin Smith, a young slave of Virginia, was allowed to preach to a slave congregation at the white Woodlawn Church in 1846, thus establishing the first area congregation pastored by a slave; and

WHEREAS, Hardin Smith had been secretly taught to read and write through the Bible by his owner's wife; he, in turn, passed on his knowledge and taught the community of slaves to read and write; according to census reports, after the abolition of slavery, there were more literate freed slaves in Haywood County than anywhere in the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Hardin Smith went on to organize six churches in Haywood and Lauderdale counties, including Woodlawn Missionary Baptist Church in Nutbush; and

WHEREAS, rebuilt with bricks from the original structure, the current Woodlawn Missionary Baptist Church building dates back to 1928; the church's old cemetery has markers detailing the church's history; and

WHEREAS, for its historical significance, Woodlawn Missionary Baptist Church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996; and

WHEREAS, one of the great religious institutions and catalysts for positive spiritual change in our State and nation, Woodlawn Missionary Baptist Church has stood on the rock-solid foundation of Christian belief, service, and love for 150 years; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby recognize and commend Pastor James T. Farmer, Jr., and the congregation of Woodlawn Missionary Baptist Church on the celebration of the church's 150th anniversary and homecoming, extending our best wishes for the church's continued success and growth in the future.

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