

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 480

By Roberts

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Mrs. Essie Vanleer Kirkman Gilbert on the celebration of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly pay tribute to those citizens who are celebrating special occasions in their estimable lives; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Essie Vanleer Kirkman Gilbert will celebrate her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on March 29, 2016, a milestone that will be commemorated as yet another precious souvenir of life's rich pageant; and

WHEREAS, the daughter of Mary Bowen and Hersey Kirkman, Mrs. Gilbert was born and raised in the Promise Land community of Charlotte by her maternal grandparents, George and Della Vanleer Bowen; and

WHEREAS, a lifelong resident of Promise Land, Essie Gilbert is revered by residents of Dickson County as the matriarch of the close-knit, historically African-American community, where she has demonstrated unremitting devotion to its preservation and betterment; and

WHEREAS, at the age of thirteen she exhibited her passion for the community when the Promise Land School, a single room, segregated school, was not assigned a teacher. A young Essie Gilbert took initiative by contacting the school superintendent to request a new teacher and left such an impression that the superintendent promptly recruited and assigned a teacher; and

WHEREAS, on June 4, 1933, Mrs. Gilbert was joined in marriage with Robert Gilbert. The couple's blessed union lasted over fifty years and produced eight children, Bobbie Jane, Beverly, Della, Serina, Linda, Rita, Joseph, and William; thirteen grandchildren; and eleven great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, despite the decline in the community's population between the 1930s and 1980s, Mrs. Gilbert helped lead efforts to revive the community and repair the Promise Land School, St. John United Methodist Church, and Promise Land Road. She successfully applied for Promise Land to receive recognition from the Tennessee State Historic Marker program and the Civil War Trails Marker program. Additionally, the Promise Land School was commemorated by the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, Essie Gilbert was among the founding members and organizers of the Promise Land Community Club, which celebrates and reinforces the community's rich heritage during its annual Promise Land Festival; and

WHEREAS, as Mrs. Gilbert approaches her eleventh decade, she is still an active and productive member of society, participating in the Promise Land Festival and various civic and community events, as her health permits; and

WHEREAS, the legacy of Essie Gilbert serves as an inspiration for current and future generations of Dickson County residents; and

WHEREAS, we wish to grasp this golden opportunity to specially recognize one of Tennessee's most outstanding citizens on this very special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate Mrs. Essie Vanleer Kirkman Gilbert on the celebration of her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and extend to her our best wishes for much continued success and happiness.

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