

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 377

By Hardaway

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Monroe James "M.J." Edwards, Sr., of Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Monroe James "M.J." Edwards, Sr.; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Edwards was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, a veteran of the United States Armed Forces who proudly served his country during World War II, M.J. Edwards was the son of sharecroppers-turned-business owners; he moved to Memphis in 1947 to work with his father, who co-owned Victory Funeral Home in Orange Mound; and

WHEREAS, in March 1980, M.J. Edwards set out on his own, opening a one-hearse funeral home along with two directors—his longtime companion Evelyn Cooper and the Reverend David Craft; in the years thereafter, M.J. Edwards Funeral Home became the largest funeral service provider in the Mid-South, primarily serving the African-American community with locations in the Memphis communities of Orange Mound, Southaven, and Raleigh; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Edwards diligently and compassionately served the people of Memphis in their times of deepest sorrow; he was a patient man who always strove to accommodate families who had difficulty in paying funeral expenses. He served thousands of families during his funeral service career, which spanned more than seven decades; and

WHEREAS, a former president of the Christian Benevolent Lodge Society and Director Emeritus of the Tri-State Bank Board of Directors, Mr. Edwards founded the M.J. Edwards

Foundation, a philanthropic organization that facilitated a number of sponsorships across the Mid-South, particularly in the Orange Mound neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, beloved and revered throughout Memphis and beyond, M.J. Edwards has been memorialized by several institutions; the M.J. Edwards Library at Memphis's Hanley Elementary School and the M.J. Edwards Health Center in Coldwater, Mississippi, were named in his honor; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Edwards was a devout Christian man; he served as chairman of Beulah Baptist Church's Trustee Board for more than sixty years, during which time he supported three pastorates; and

WHEREAS, he was always deeply devoted to his family; he is survived by two sons, Kenneth J. Edwards and Monroe J. Edwards, Jr.; longtime companion Evelyn Cooper; three grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and three siblings, Doris Edwards Hayes, Freddie C. Edwards, and Roy Hoskins; and

WHEREAS, M.J. Edwards leaves behind a legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Monroe James "M.J." Edwards, Sr., reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Edwards.

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