

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to the National Statuary Hall;
3 requesting the Joint Committee on the Library of
4 Congress to approve the replacement of the statue of
5 Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith in the National
6 Statuary Hall Collection with a statue of Mary McLeod
7 Bethune; providing for the transfer of ownership of
8 the statue of General Edmund Kirby Smith to the state;
9 requiring the Division of Cultural Affairs of the
10 Department of State to take possession of the statue
11 and make available for public display; providing that
12 this act is an official request to the Joint Committee
13 on the Library of Congress; requiring the Department
14 of State to deliver copies of the act to certain
15 persons on the effective date of this act; providing
16 an effective date.

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18 WHEREAS, in March 2016, the Florida Legislature passed, and
19 the Governor signed into law, Senate Bill 310, authorizing the
20 replacement of the statue of Confederate General Edmund Kirby
21 Smith in the National Statuary Hall Collection with a statue of
22 a prominent Florida citizen recommended by the ad hoc committee
23 of the Great Floridians Program within the Division of
24 Historical Resources of the Department of State, and

25 WHEREAS, one of the three prominent Florida citizens
26 recommended by the ad hoc committee is Mary McLeod Bethune, and

27 WHEREAS, Mary McLeod Bethune was born on July 10, 1875, in
28 Mayesville, South Carolina, and she was the first member of her
29 family, including all of her 16 siblings, born free following
30 the conclusion of the Civil War, and

31 WHEREAS, beginning at a young age, Mary McLeod Bethune
32 became engaged with learning and teaching after receiving an
33 opportunity to attend Trinity Presbyterian Mission School in her
34 hometown, and her dedication was evidenced through attending as
35 many classes as she could and teaching her parents and siblings
36 what she had learned, and

37 WHEREAS, Mary McLeod Bethune was awarded a scholarship
38 allowing her to enroll at the then-Scotia Seminary for Girls in
39 Concord, North Carolina, from which she graduated in 1893, and
40 she went on to continue her studies at the Moody Bible Institute
41 in Chicago, and

42 WHEREAS, upon graduating from the Moody Bible Institute,
43 Mary McLeod Bethune became a teacher and taught at schools in
44 Georgia and South Carolina before moving to Florida to teach at
45 the Palatka Mission School, and

46 WHEREAS, through observing the burgeoning black population
47 in the area prompted by labor needed for railroad construction,
48 Mary McLeod Bethune decided to follow through with her dream of
49 opening her own school, and

50 WHEREAS, Mary McLeod Bethune bought a small cottage in
51 Daytona Beach to allow for the opening of the Daytona Literary
52 and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in 1904 and
53 through her commitment to fundraising, the school's enrollment
54 grew from 5 to 250 students in just 2 years, and

55 WHEREAS, the school continued to grow, which eventually
56 resulted in its merger with the Cookman Institute for Men in
57 Jacksonville to form Bethune-Cookman College, where she later
58 served as president, and

59 WHEREAS, Mary McLeod Bethune's advocacy continued with her
60 founding of the National Council of Negro Women and her
61 appointment as Director of the Division of Negro Affairs of the
62 National Youth Administration by President Franklin Delano
63 Roosevelt, and

64 WHEREAS, through her position as the highest ranking
65 African-American woman in the Federal Government, Mary McLeod
66 Bethune was able to assist African-American youth in finding
67 employment and worked with the Women's Army Corps during World
68 War II to recruit African-American female officers, and

69 WHEREAS, upon her death in 1955, Mary McLeod Bethune's
70 inspirational leadership was praised by many, including former
71 First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who lauded "her wisdom and her
72 goodness," and

73 WHEREAS, in 1995, the United States National Park Service
74 established the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National

75 Historic Site in Washington, D.C., which has preserved the
 76 townhouse that was once her personal residence and the first
 77 headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women, and

78 WHEREAS, Mary McLeod Bethune's legacy continues to be felt
 79 in Florida through the continued success of Bethune-Cookman
 80 University, whose enrollment is currently approaching a record
 81 high of 4,000 students, and

82 WHEREAS, it is appropriate to honor Mary McLeod Bethune as
 83 one of two Floridians memorialized in statues in the National
 84 Statuary Hall Collection given her significant and continuing
 85 impact on this state, NOW, THEREFORE,

86

87 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

88

89 Section 1. The Legislature of the State of Florida hereby
 90 respectfully requests the Joint Committee on the Library of
 91 Congress to approve the replacement of the statue of Confederate
 92 General Edmund Kirby Smith in the National Statuary Hall
 93 Collection with a statue of Mary McLeod Bethune. Contingent upon
 94 such approval by the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress,
 95 ownership of the statue of General Edmund Kirby Smith shall
 96 transfer to the state in accordance with 2 U.S.C. s. 2132(d).
 97 The Division of Cultural Affairs of the Department of State
 98 shall take possession of the returned statue and make the statue
 99 available for public display.

100 Section 2. This act shall serve as an official request to
101 the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress pursuant to 2
102 U.S.C. s. 2132.

103 Section 3. On the effective date of this act, the
104 Department of State shall deliver a copy of this act to the
105 President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United
106 States House of Representatives, the Joint Committee on the
107 Library of Congress, and to each member of the Florida
108 delegation to the United States Congress.

109 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.