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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2016

SENATE RESOLUTION

EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES ON THE PASSING OF OUR FORMER COLLEAGUE, THE
HONORABLE MELVOID J. BENSON

Introduced By: Senator James C. Sheehan

Date Introduced: June 15, 2016

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, It is with deep sadness and profound sympathy that this Senate mourns the
2 passing on June 12, 2016, of our beloved friend and colleague, Melvoid J. Benson, an honest and
3 no-nonsense gentlewoman, who for many years, truly and whole-heartedly represented the people
4 of the town of North Kingstown in the Rhode Island House of Representatives; and

5 WHEREAS, Melvoid Benson was the beloved wife of the late Arnathia "Ben" Benson,
6 and the cherished mother of the late Gilbert and Estes Benson. She attended Lane College,
7 graduating in 1951 with a Bachelor's degree in Social Science and a minor in Education. In the
8 early 1960s, she moved to Rhode Island from her home state of Tennessee and took a position as
9 a teacher until her retirement in 1990; and

10 WHEREAS, During her 25-year teaching career, Mel taught at Hamilton Elementary
11 School, the former Quonset Elementary School, Davisville Middle School, and Wickford Middle
12 School; and

13 WHEREAS, On November 6, 1990, the Honorable Melvoid Benson was elected to the
14 Rhode Island House of Representatives, where she represented the North Kingstown community
15 for seven terms. She was notably the first black woman to be elected to the Rhode Island
16 legislature and took pride in her efforts to establish the Quonset Business Park. Described as
17 tough, direct, and honest, it was often said that you wouldn't ask Mel a question if you didn't
18 want to hear an honest response; and

19 WHEREAS, Returning to her roots in education, Mel successfully ran for a seat on the

1 North Kingstown School Committee, serving from 2004 until 2012, when she chose not to run for
2 re-election; and

3 WHEREAS, Always active in the community, Mel was a board member of Family
4 Service of Rhode Island Inc., and a member of the North Kingstown Democratic Town
5 Committee; and

6 WHEREAS, Earning a panoply of honors over the course of her illustrious lifetime,
7 Congress has proposed to officially designate the North Kingstown United States Postal Service
8 building as the "Melvoid J. Benson Post Office Building" in her honor; and

9 WHEREAS, Mel Benson enriched the lives of all who were fortunate enough to have
10 been part of her noble life, and her dedication to public service has truly made the future
11 healthier, safer, and a bit brighter for the citizens of this state; now, therefore be it

12 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
13 hereby expresses our deepest sympathies to the family of the Honorable Melvoid J. Benson. We
14 further avow that she will forever be warmly remembered by this membership and the citizens of
15 Rhode Island for the profundity and generosity of her heart, and for the lifetime of service she
16 bestowed on the people of this state; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
18 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to the North Kingstown United Methodist Church.

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