

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 161

By McKenzie

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Robert J. Booker for his meritorious service to the City of Knoxville.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should specially recognize those estimable public servants who, through their extraordinary efforts, have become leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such estimable individual is Robert J. Booker, who has rendered many years of sterling service to the City of Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, born on April 4, 1935, Robert Booker is a Knoxville native and a 1953 graduate of Austin High School; and

WHEREAS, he graduated from Knoxville College in 1962 with a degree in English and a minor in French; while attending school, Mr. Booker served as president of the student body for two terms, and he spent the summer of 1961 in the Republic of Guinea as part of Operation Crossroads Africa; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Booker was elected in his freshman year as the campus chapter president of the NAACP; as a student leader, he helped initiate and conduct the sit-ins of Knoxville, a movement that eventually led to the desegregation of the city's lunch counters, movie theaters, and other public spaces; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Booker held several distinguished positions during his career in public service, and for seven years, he served as an administrative assistant to former mayor Kyle Testerman of Knoxville, and he was appointed by Governor Lamar Alexander as the first African American to serve on the Tennessee Civil Service Commission; in 1967, Mr. Booker was elected the first African American to the State Legislature in Knoxville, in which position he served for three terms in the 85th through 87th General Assemblies, until 1972; and

WHEREAS, for seventeen years, Mr. Booker served as the executive director for the Beck Cultural Exchange Center; he is also the historian for the Beck Cultural Exchange Center, Knoxville College, and the Tabernacle Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Booker served with distinction in the United States Army for three years; he was stationed in France and England, where he was an information education specialist; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Booker is a renowned and influential leader of his community, and he is the founding president of the National Austin High School Alumni Association; from 1987 to 1991, he wrote a weekly column for the former *Knoxville Journal*, and since 2003, he has written a weekly column for the *Knoxville News Sentinel*; and

WHEREAS, for nearly forty years, Mr. Booker has completed extensive research on the history of Knoxville; he authored numerous publications, including *The Story of Mechanicsville 1875-2008* and *The Story of East Knoxville from the Beginning 1856-2004*; and

WHEREAS, his books include a re-release of *The Heat of a Red Summer. Race Mixing, Race Rioting in 1919 Knoxville*; *Two-Hundred Years of Black Culture in Knoxville, Tennessee 1791-1991*; *And There Was Light! The 120-Year History of Knoxville College, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1844-1974*; *An Encyclopedia: Experiences of Black People in Knoxville, Tennessee, 1844-1974*; and *From the Bottom Up*; and

WHEREAS, Robert Booker has diligently represented the City of Knoxville and distinguished himself as an exceptional community and civil liberties leader; and

WHEREAS, Robert Booker epitomizes the spirit and commitment that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Robert J. Booker for his years of dedicated service to the City of Knoxville and extend to him our best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.