

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 686

By Staples

A RESOLUTION relative to the bust of Nathan Bedford Forrest in the State Capitol.

WHEREAS, a bust of Nathan Bedford Forrest was installed in the State Capitol in 1978;
and

WHEREAS, since the day of its dedication, the Forrest bust has been the subject of debate and protest, and its presence in the State Capitol continues to be a divisive issue among Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, while supporters extol Nathan Bedford Forrest's innovative military leadership as a general for the Confederacy during the Civil War, opponents emphasize his career as a slave trader, his role in the Fort Pillow massacre, and his leadership in the Ku Klux Klan; and

WHEREAS, there are literally thousands of Tennesseans more deserving of being honored in the State Capitol, including the late Anne M. Davis of Knoxville and Gatlinburg and the late William F. Yardley of Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, Anne M. Davis was instrumental in the founding of Great Smoky Mountains National Park; as only the third woman elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives, she successfully sponsored legislation for the purchase of more than 78,000 acres of mountain land for the park; and

WHEREAS, she was also active in the League of Women Voters and led the movement to establish a library in Gatlinburg; and

WHEREAS, William F. Yardley, an influential and powerful advocate for the legal rights of blacks, was the first African American to run for governor of Tennessee; although he lost as an independent candidate in the 1876 gubernatorial election, thereafter Knoxvilleians referred to

him as either "Squire Yardley" or "Governor Yardley" because of his eloquence on the stump;
and

WHEREAS, the first African-American lawyer in Knoxville, William F. Yardley was also possibly the first African-American attorney to take a case to the Tennessee Supreme Court; in 1885, he argued against requiring jail inmates to "work off" the costs of state prosecution, a practice that made poor inmates near-slaves; and

WHEREAS, in addition to serving as a Knoxville city alderman and on the Knox County Court, he was also assistant chief of Knoxville's first fire department and the publisher and editor of Knoxville's first black newspaper, the *Knoxville Examiner*; and

WHEREAS, these Tennesseans are richly deserving of being honored in the State Capitol, as they inspired many present-day Tennesseans to participate in civic affairs and will continue to serve as a beacon of dedicated public service for future generations; 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 suggest that the bust of Nathan Bedford Forrest be removed from the State Capitol and an appropriate tribute to a deserving Tennessean such as William F. Yardley or Anne M. Davis be placed in that location instead.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to Governor Bill Lee and each member of the Capitol Commission.