

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 862

By Hardaway

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Sara L. Lewis of  
Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Sara L. Lewis, a local education leader who spent a lifetime advocating for equity, social justice, and educational excellence; and

WHEREAS, a native Memphian, Mrs. Lewis earned a full ride to LeMoyne-Owen College after receiving high scores on the college admittance test; she often told the story of how her father took her out of school to go to the Board of Education office and retake the test in front of witnesses, to quell the prejudiced doubts of those who suspected she could not have scored so high on her own; and

WHEREAS, she ultimately obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree from LeMoyne-Owen College and her M.Ed. in Elementary Education from the University of Memphis; in 1960, she began her career as a teacher at the then-segregated Georgia Avenue Elementary School, and she was named principal of Lauderdale Elementary School in 1974, serving in that capacity until 1983; and

WHEREAS, such was her intellect, drive, and effectiveness that she was selected to serve as assistant superintendent for the Department of Curriculum and Instruction of Memphis City Schools in 1983; after seven years at this post, she left to serve as the executive director of Free the Children, Inc., an anti-poverty program, and remained there until 1998, when she became the director of Shelby County Head Start, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, Sara Lewis began her illustrious tenure as a member of the Memphis City Schools Board of Education in 1991, serving three consecutive terms until her departure in 2006; she was once again elected to the board in 2010, serving from 2011 to 2013; and

WHEREAS, as a member of the school board, Mrs. Lewis was unafraid to speak her mind in service of the children of her district, and her wisdom and integrity were a guiding light for her fellow board members; and

WHEREAS, highly regarded and sought after for her leadership and expertise, Mrs. Lewis served on the Board of Directors for various organizations, including the United Way of Greater Memphis, Memphis in May, Junior Achievement of Memphis, the Memphis Literacy Council, Leadership Memphis, and Memphis Museum Systems; and

WHEREAS, Sara Lewis further served as commissioner of the Private Industry Council, chair of the Planning Committee of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, and a member of former Vice President Al Gore's Tennessee Family Reunion Steering Committee, the Memphis National Center of Urban Partnership, Family Services of Memphis, Memphis Center for Urban Partnership, and Youth Fair Chance/Youth Opportunities Unlimited National Network; and

WHEREAS, she initiated efforts to secure a grant that led to the creation of the Memphis Youth Initiative and initiated, coordinated, and developed the Youth Entrepreneurial Development Program for Disadvantaged Youth; and

WHEREAS, often duly honored for her good work throughout the community, Mrs. Lewis received the Tennessee Education Association's Susan B. Anthony Award for outstanding leadership in support of women's issues, the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority's Outstanding Service Award, *The Washington Times* Foundation's American Century Award, the Tennessee Black History Celebration's Guardian Award, and the University of Memphis Distinguished Alumni Award, to name but a few of her many accolades over the years; and

WHEREAS, she was also wholly devoted to her family, including her husband, Aaron L. Lewis; son, Aaron Lorenzo Lewis, Jr., and daughter-in-law, Catherine J. Lewis; five

grandchildren, DeAara Lewis, Deneka Lewis, Travis Lewis, Aaron L. Lewis III, and Raven Lewis; and several nieces and nephews, including Velita Pearson and VeSara Works; and

WHEREAS, Sara Lewis will be remembered for her passionate, unyielding commitment to education reform and social justice issues affecting her fellow Memphians; and

WHEREAS, her unwavering commitment to improving the education system and advocating for the rights of students, and her belief in education as the key to empowerment, have left an indelible mark on Memphis, Shelby County, and this State; 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 honor the memory of Sara L. Lewis, reflecting fondly upon her fierce commitment to the children of Memphis and Shelby County and her enduring legacy of justice, equity, and excellence.

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.