

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 37

By Haile

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Welch College on the occasion of its seventy-fifth anniversary.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are proud to recognize those institutions of higher learning that are dedicated to the education of men and women and provide a curriculum emphasizing the dignity of the human person; and

WHEREAS, Welch College in Nashville is one such institution of higher learning, which has, since its founding, offered personalized instruction in small classes to ensure that each student achieves his or her full academic and personal potential; and

WHEREAS, celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary this year, Welch College was founded in 1942 as Free Will Baptist Bible College by the National Association of Free Will Baptists; Nashville was chosen because of its central location among the major centers of the denominational population in the Southeast, Southwest, and Midwest; and

WHEREAS, the college purchased one building, later known as Davidson Hall, on Richland Avenue in the historic Richland-West End neighborhood; eight students gathered there in 1942, comprising the original student body; the original faculty and staff numbered four, including such luminaries as Laura Belle Barnard, J. R. Davidson, and Henry Melvin; and

WHEREAS, originally a two-year institution, the college added a third year of study in 1949 and a fourth year of study in 1950; its first bachelor's degrees were awarded to five seniors in 1951; and

WHEREAS, subscribing to the beliefs and practices set forth in the Free Will Baptist Treatise, the Board of Education selected Georgia native Dr. Linton C. Johnson as the college's first president, a post he held for thirty-four years; in that time, the ministry of Dr. Johnson and his wife, Ruth, was of singular influence in shaping the character of the college, its sponsoring

denomination, and its theological expression in the twentieth century; under Dr. Johnson's leadership, the college moved from a fledgling Bible school to a comprehensive, accredited Bible college with numerous new buildings and programs of study; and

WHEREAS, other presidents include L. R. Ennis, who served from 1944 to 1947; Dr. Charles A. Thigpen, who served from 1979 to 1990; and Dr. C. Thomas Malone, who served from 1990 to 2002; the current president, Dr. J. Matthew Pinson, began his tenure in 2002; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, the college purchased sixty-six acres of land in nearby Gallatin on which to build a new campus that would provide for increased enrollment, meet the needs of the physically challenged, and provide space for student recreation and athletic activities; the new campus launches this year; and

WHEREAS, honoring John L. and Mary Welch, in 2012, the college changed its name to Welch College, signifying its development into a more comprehensive Christian college; John Welch was the leading figure in bringing together eastern and western Free Will Baptists to establish the National Association of Free Will Baptists in 1935 and served as the first moderator and secretary of education of that association, and Mary Welch served faithfully as a secretary at the college and was a leader in the denomination's women's movement; and

WHEREAS, accredited by the Commission on College of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the Association for Biblical Higher Education, Welch College currently offers forty programs of study and enrolls about 340 students annually from approximately twenty-five states and several international countries; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and commend the faculty, staff, students, alumni, and supporters of Welch College for their commitment to higher education, congratulate them upon their seventy-fifth anniversary, and extend 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.