

1 HR402
2 130161-1
3 By Representatives Colston and Melton
4 RFD:
5 First Read: 21-APR-11

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7
8 MOURNING THE DEATH OF MR. JOSEPH PETTWAY, SR.

9
10 WHEREAS, with profound sorrow and regret, we receive
11 news of the death of Mr. Joseph Pettway, Sr., on April 16,
12 2011, at the age of 93 years; and

13 WHEREAS, the passing of Mr. Pettway leaves a void in
14 the lives of his loving family, his many friends, and the
15 entire community, where he was highly regarded as a community
16 leader, businessman, and trailblazer of the Civil Rights
17 Movement, devoting his life to the cause of equality for
18 Blacks; and

19 WHEREAS, born on February 8, 1918, in Pass
20 Christian, Mississippi, his mother died when he was an infant
21 and he was reared by his paternal grandmother near Gee's Bend
22 on a sharecropping farm; he was endowed with a strong work
23 ethic, love of education, and unwavering commitment to justice
24 and serving his fellowman; and

25 WHEREAS, after gaining a high school diploma through
26 a correspondence course, he was hired by the Southern
27 Railroad, where he was retired in 1969 as the first Black

1 foreman in Alabama after a series of hard-won promotions; a
2 man of many talents, he was an expert builder, farmer, and
3 businessman, the owner and operator of Pettway's Place, where
4 he and his wife conducted citizenship classes; and

5 WHEREAS, he was baptized at Oak Grove Missionary
6 Baptist Church and served faithfully there until uniting with
7 Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church in 1984, where he was a
8 deacon for 27 years, superintendent of the Sunday School, and
9 active in the Uniontown District Association and Sunday School
10 Congress; and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. Pettway's key Civil Rights role began
12 when he attended the first Mass Meeting at Tabernacle Baptist
13 Church, and he participated wholeheartedly in the movement; he
14 was a shareholder in B and P Grocery Store, a furniture store,
15 a credit union, and any activity that advanced the financial,
16 social, and economic well-being of Black people; and

17 WHEREAS, he was determined to become a registered
18 voter and a first-class citizen of the United States of
19 America and was rejected many times by the Dallas County Board
20 of Registrars before he finally registered as a beneficiary of
21 the 1965 Voting Rights Act; because of his activism, his
22 business was boycotted and a cross was burned on his property,
23 but he persevered; his trailblazing candidacy for the Dallas
24 County Commission paved the way for the election of the first
25 Black member, and on every Election Day he transported voters
26 to the polls and assisted them in exercising their rights; and

1 WHEREAS, Mr. Pettway was a founding member of the
2 Safford Improvement Association and was a mentor and role
3 model for young men; as a supporter of education for all
4 children, he was a dedicated member of the Tri-Church
5 Scholarship program and challenged others to contribute; he
6 also proudly supported Black businesses in the area; and

7 WHEREAS, married to Menda Gamble Pettway for 60
8 years, he is the father of Coach Joseph Pettway and Judge Jo
9 Celeste Pettway; adoptive father of Maxwell Cabble; and
10 grandfather of four; and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. Pettway was an unheralded warrior in
12 the struggle for equality and justice; although his presence
13 will be missed, his legacy will endure and his memory will be
14 cherished in the hearts and minds of those who were fortunate
15 to know him; now therefore,

16 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF
17 THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, That the death of Mr. Joseph
18 Pettway, Sr., is recorded with deep sadness, and this
19 resolution is offered in highest tribute to his life of
20 achievement and service, along with heartfelt sympathy to his
21 grieving family.