

1 HJR167  
2 168037-3  
3 By Representative Knight  
4 RFD: Rules  
5 First Read: 28-APR-15

1  
2 ENROLLED, House Joint Resolution,

3 MOURNING THE DEATH OF RENOWNED HEART SURGEON AND  
4 CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST DR. LEVI WATKINS, JR.  
5

6 WHEREAS, we deeply regret and are greatly saddened  
7 to learn of the death of renowned heart surgeon and civil  
8 rights activist Dr. Levi Watkins, Jr.; his invaluable life of  
9 70 years is commended and celebrated with tremendous  
10 thanksgiving; and

11 WHEREAS, the passing of Dr. Watkins leaves a void in  
12 the lives of his loving family and many friends and the  
13 numerous patients and individuals worldwide who have greatly  
14 benefitted from his meritorious life's work; and

15 WHEREAS, Dr. Watkins was born June 13, 1944, in  
16 Parsons, Kansas; at a young age, he was baptized by the  
17 Reverend Ralph Abernathy in Birmingham, Alabama; he moved with  
18 his family to Montgomery, Alabama, and joined Dexter Avenue  
19 Baptist Church under the pastorship of Dr. Martin Luther King,  
20 Jr.; and

21 WHEREAS, Dr. Watkins earned a Bachelor's Degree from  
22 Tennessee State University and became the first black student  
23 to enter and graduate from the Vanderbilt University School of  
24 Medicine; he completed a surgical internship at Johns Hopkins  
25 University Hospital, emerging as its first black chief

1 resident in cardiac surgery and conducted ground breaking  
2 research at Harvard Medical School, which opened the doors for  
3 the use of angiotensin blockers to treat congestive heart  
4 failure; in addition, he became a full-time faculty member and  
5 a member of the medical school's admissions committee; and

6 WHEREAS, notably, Dr. Watkins has the utmost  
7 distinctions of being the first surgeon to successfully  
8 implant an automatic heart defibrillator in a human patient  
9 and of being nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize for his  
10 significant medical contributions; and

11 WHEREAS, he is noted as an advocate for civil rights  
12 who paved the way for many black students to attend medical  
13 school; in an interview, he stated that all his work since the  
14 integration of Vanderbilt University had been about inclusion,  
15 equity, and opportunity; and

16 WHEREAS, Dr. Watkins was a valued member of society;  
17 even though his presence is greatly missed, his memory is  
18 cherished in the hearts and minds of all those who were  
19 fortunate enough to know him; now therefore,

20 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH  
21 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That while grieving the death of  
22 Dr. Levi Watkins, Jr., we are extremely grateful for his  
23 abundant life, and we offer this resolution in highest tribute  
24 to his inspiring legacy, as well as in heartfelt sympathy to  
25 his family and friends.

