

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

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8 MOURNING THE DEATH OF RENOWNED HEART SURGEON AND
9 CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST DR. LEVI WATKINS, JR.
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11 WHEREAS, we deeply regret and are greatly saddened
12 to learn of the death of renowned heart surgeon and civil
13 rights activist Dr. Levi Watkins, Jr.; his invaluable life of
14 70 years is commended and celebrated with tremendous
15 thanksgiving; and

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

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

26 WHEREAS, Dr. Watkins earned a Bachelor's Degree from
27 Tennessee State University and became the first black student

1 to enter and graduate from the Vanderbilt University School of
2 Medicine; he completed a surgical internship at Johns Hopkins
3 University Hospital, emerging as its first black chief
4 resident in cardiac surgery and conducted ground breaking
5 research at Harvard Medical School, which opened the doors for
6 the use of angiotensin blockers to treat congestive heart
7 failure; in addition, he became a full-time faculty member and
8 a member of the medical school's admissions committee; and

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

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

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

23 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, BOTH
24 HOUSES THEREOF CONCURRING, That while grieving the death of
25 Dr. Levi Watkins, Jr., we are extremely grateful for his
26 abundant life, and we offer this resolution in highest tribute

1 to his inspiring legacy, as well as in heartfelt sympathy to
2 his family and friends.