

By Representative Bush

1 House Resolution

2 A resolution in memory of the Reverend James W.
3 Stepherson.

4
5 WHEREAS, the Reverend James W. Stepherson, a revered
6 and respected religious and civic leader in the Miami-Dade
7 area, passed away September 8, 1998, at his North Miami home
8 at the age of 84, and

9 WHEREAS, James W. Stepherson was born and reared in
10 rural Georgia, where he began his career as a minister and
11 married his wife, Effie, and where they raised their sons,
12 James II, Johnny, and Hilton, and daughter, Jeanette, and

13 WHEREAS, in 1960 Reverend Stepherson, with his wife and
14 daughter, moved to the Miami-Dade area to become pastor at
15 Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Brownsville, which he
16 transformed from a wooden shack to a towering church and for
17 which he was pastor until 1995 and pastor emeritus for the
18 ensuing 3 years, and

19 WHEREAS, in addition to establishing his religious
20 leadership, Reverend Stepherson soon displayed his skills as a
21 civic leader, becoming the founding president of P.U.L.S.E.,
22 People United to Lead the Struggle for Equality, which was
23 formed in 1981 to exact fair treatment for African-Americans
24 at work and in court and which he led for 3 years, and

25 WHEREAS, Reverend Stepherson fought many battles with
26 local employers to grant African-Americans equal access to
27 jobs, including that against Florida Power and Light Company,
28 in which he urged African-Americans to pay their utility bills
29 with pennies until the company's hiring practices changed, and
30 other equally successful ones against Southern Bell, the
31 Dupont Plaza Hotel, and the Miami-Dade Police Department, and

1 WHEREAS, during the trial of Luis Alvarez, a Miami
2 Police Officer who shot and killed Nevell Johnson in Overtown
3 in 1982, which led to civil unrest in that community, Reverend
4 Stepherson and P.U.L.S.E. led protests against use of the
5 privilege of peremptory challenge to exclude African-Americans
6 from the jury, a privilege which was eventually changed as a
7 result of similar protests nationwide, and

8 WHEREAS, to the end, Reverend Stepherson directed his
9 efforts to reshaping and improving the community of which he
10 was a part, insisting that it be fair and inclusive, and as a
11 result he affected not only the Miami-Dade area but also the
12 entire state, NOW, THEREFORE,

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14 Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of
15 Florida:

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17 That the House of Representatives honors the Reverend
18 James W. Stepherson, in memoriam, for his religious and civic
19 leadership and extraordinary contributions to the Miami-Dade
20 area and the State of Florida.

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution
22 be presented to Mrs. Effie Stepherson as a tangible token of
23 the sentiments expressed herein.

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