

SR-101, As Adopted by Senate, December 17, 2009

Senator Scott offered the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 101.

A resolution in memory of the Honorable Erma Henderson, president emeritus of the Detroit City Council, the first African-American woman elected president of the Detroit City Council, and the only person to have served as president for three consecutive terms.

Whereas, Erma Henderson was born in 1917 and raised in Black Bottom of Detroit. As a child, she joined Calvary Baptist Church. By the age of 14, she was singing solos, teaching Sunday School, and running health programs for the church. Later, Mrs. Henderson transitioned to the Unity Church, and in 1974, she became an ordained minister in Ryan's Divine Temple of Mental Science; and

Whereas, At age 21, Mrs. Henderson was elected precinct delegate in the Republican Party. Later, inspired by the union movement, she allied with the Democratic Party and the Progressive Party in 1943; and

Whereas, Mrs. Henderson founded the Women's Conference of Concerns, representing 250,000 women at its peak, with the objective to take a stance on women's rights. She was head of the Equal Justice Council, a group that revealed gender- and race-based discrepancies in judicial sentencing. Mrs. Henderson organized Women in Municipal Government in Michigan, uniting women in city governments across the country; and

Whereas, On November 27, 1972, Mrs. Henderson was sworn into the Detroit City Council and served for 16 years. In 1975, she became the first African-American woman to be elected Detroit City Council president and the only person to have held that position for three consecutive terms; and

Whereas, In 1975, Mrs. Henderson organized the Michigan Statewide Coalition Against Redlining, which is credited for the state's anti-redlining law. In July of 1982, she held an unprecedented four-day international trade conference for the Michigan Chapter of the Continental African Chamber of Commerce, bringing together ambassadors and ministers of finance from 23 African nations to effectuate trade packages; and

Whereas, Mrs. Henderson devoted her life to social activism, racial and cultural inclusion, democratic ideals, and spiritual principles. During her political career, Mrs. Henderson consistently focused on issues regarding peace and human rights, particularly equal rights for women; and

Whereas, Mrs. Henderson met Paul Robeson and Albert Einstein, led the battle against insurance redlining in the city of Detroit, and traveled to Cape Town, South Africa, for the ordination of Archbishop Desmond Tutu; and

Whereas, Mrs. Henderson shared her experiences through her book *Down Through the Years*. After losing her sight in 1993, Mrs. Henderson retained her focus on writing books and letting others know that the power of God lives inside them; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we hereby offer our words of praise as a memorial for Detroit City Council President Emeritus Erma Henderson; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the city of Detroit and the family of Erma Henderson, that they may find comfort in their faith and their memories of this fine woman and her distinguished life.