**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO HONOR THE LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF PROMINENT AFRICAN AMERICAN RESTAURATEUR SYLVIA WOODS, A NATIVE OF HEMINGWAY.

Whereas, dubbed the Queen of Soul Food, Sylvia Woods was the owner of Sylvia’s Restaurant in Harlem, New York City. She was born Sylvia Pressley in Hemingway on February 2, 1926. Enterprising and hardworking throughout her life, she earned her beautician’s license at night while attending junior high school. While a teenager, the young Sylvia moved to New York City. Childhood sweetheart Herbert Woods followed her, and they were married in 1944; and

Whereas, she began working at Johnson’s Luncheonette in central Harlem in 1954. Seven years later, Sylvia and her husband bought the luncheonette for twenty thousand dollars, ten percent of which came from her savings, the rest was borrowed from her mother, who mortgaged her South Carolina farm to help pay for the purchase. In 1962, Mrs. Woods changed the name of her business to Sylvia’s. Although the restaurant was highly regarded by Harlem residents and visiting performers, its first major publicity to the outside world came with Gael Greene’s 1979 *New York* magazine piece “Harlem on My Mind”; and

Whereas, from that point, Sylvia’s Restaurant became a destination for tourists from around the world. Sylvia’s boasted a host of customers prominent in entertainment and politics, including James Brown, Roberta Flack, Chris Rock, Sidney Poitier, Quincy Jones, Diana Ross, Grandmaster Flash, and Muhammad Ali. Harlem Congressman Charles Rangel was a regular customer by the 1980s, and in 1993 he persuaded President Bill Clinton to visit. The Clintons subsequently invited Sylvia to the White House for their last Christmas in office (2000), and former President Clinton later spoke at her memorial. In 2007, then Senator Barack Obama of Illinois first visited Sylvia’s, accompanied by the Reverend Al Sharpton; and

Whereas, Sylvia Woods wrote two cookbooks, created Sylvia’s Also Catering Hall, Sylvia’s Catering Corp., Sylvia’s Food Products, and the Sylvia and Herbert Woods Scholarship Foundation. She also accumulated an impressive real estate portfolio; and

Whereas, after a life of exemplary accomplishments and groundbreaking achievements, Sylvia departed this world on July 19, 2012, in her Mount Vernon, New York, home; and

Whereas, the legacy of Sylvia Woods endures today as three generations of the Woods family own and operate the various family businesses, including Sylvia’s, which still sustains its Harlem community with the best of soul food. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, honor the life and achievements of prominent African American restaurateur Sylvia Woods, a native of Hemingway.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Sylvia Woods.

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