

By Senator Miller

18-2477-03

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Senate Resolution No. ____

A resolution honoring the life, career, and
accomplishments of Robert William Saunders, Sr.

WHEREAS, Robert William Saunders, Sr. referred to as "a
trailblazer who never complained about his task," was born in
Tampa June 9, 1921, seemingly destined for a life of activism
and dedication to the struggle for human and civil rights, and

WHEREAS, a graduate of George S. Middleton High School,
Bob Saunders earned an associate of arts degree from
Bethune-Cookman College before being drafted into the United
States Army, where he served as a sergeant in the Air Corps
during World War II before being awarded a bachelor of arts
degree at the Detroit Institute of Technology and entering the
University of Detroit Law School, and

WHEREAS, Bob Saunders had received his introduction to
the NAACP as a newsboy during his school years in Tampa, but
not until he left the Florida Sentinel as editor of his own
column to join the Cleveland Call and Post at its Cincinnati
office did he begin his work with the NAACP, and

WHEREAS, considering himself honored at the
opportunity, Bob Saunders served as the Field Secretary of the
Florida Chapter of the NAACP during the era of the nation's
greatest civil rights gains, having accepted the assignment
following the bombing death of his predecessor, Harry T.
Moore, a position in which he worked closely with Thurgood
Marshall, later the first black United States Supreme Court
Justice, and with Medgar Evers, his Mississippi counterpart,
who also was assassinated, and

WHEREAS, in 1966, Bob Saunders was appointed by
President Lyndon Johnson as Director of Equal Opportunity for

1 the Southeast Region of the Office of Economic Opportunity,
2 and 10 years later returned to Tampa to create the
3 Hillsborough County Office of Equal Opportunity, a program for
4 which he was responsible until his retirement, in 1988,
5 launched him into an energetic period of compiling and
6 cataloging his experiences, an effort crowned by the authoring
7 of his memoirs, "Bridging the Gap," and

8 WHEREAS, on March 18, 2003, after a fruitful life of
9 service, 81-year-old Robert William Saunders, Sr., succumbed
10 to injuries sustained in an automobile accident, NOW,
11 THEREFORE,

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13 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

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15 That the Florida Senate pauses in its deliberations to
16 recognize and mourn the passing of Robert William Saunders,
17 Sr., and to express its admiration for his many
18 accomplishments as a Civil Rights leader.

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