



HR 9129

2003

House Resolution

1
2 A resolution honoring the memory of Robert William
3 Saunders, Sr.

4
5 WHEREAS, referred to as "a trailblazer who never complained
6 about his task," Tampa native Robert William Saunders, Sr., was
7 born June 9, 1921, seemingly destined for a life of activism and
8 dedication to the struggle for human and civil rights, and

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

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

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



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30 WHEREAS, in 1966, Bob Saunders was appointed by President
 31 Lyndon Johnson as Director of Equal Opportunity for the
 32 Southeast Region of the Office of Economic Opportunity, and 10
 33 years later, he returned to Tampa to create the Hillsborough
 34 County Office of Equal Opportunity, a program for which he was
 35 responsible until his retirement in 1988 launched him into an
 36 energetic period of compiling and cataloging his experiences, an
 37 effort crowned by the authoring of his memoirs, "Bridging the
 38 Gap," and

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

42
 43 Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of
 44 Florida:

45
 46 That the House of Representatives pauses to honor the
 47 memory and accomplishments of a "tenacious, uncompromising, and
 48 fearless" man.

49 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be
 50 presented to Mrs. Helen Saunders and to Robert W. Saunders, Jr.,
 51 as a tangible token of the sentiments expressed herein.