

HR 9097

2006

## House Resolution

A resolution honoring the late MaVynee Oshun Betsch.

WHEREAS, dubbed the "face of American Beach," Nassau County's most famous resident, MaVynee Oshun Betsch, has been featured in numerous national and regional publications, including "Smithsonian Magazine," "Preservation," and "Sierra"; has been called a recognized leader in preserving land and history in the South; and was one of six who recently received a freedom award from the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, typical of the many honors she received during her lifetime, and

WHEREAS, MaVynee Oshun Betsch was born in 1935, the same year in which her great-grandfather Abraham Lincoln Lewis led in the founding of American Beach on the southern end of Amelia Island as a resort for African Americans during a time they were barred from beaches reserved for whites, and

WHEREAS, Ms. Betsch was educated at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio, studied voice in Paris, and moved to Germany, where she performed and sang opera for a decade before she returned to her beloved island and earned the title of "Beach Lady" for her determined fight to protect American Beach from development and preserve its history, and

WHEREAS, in time, Ms. Betsch persuaded a local developer to donate to the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve of the National Park Service a 60-foot-tall sand dune she named NaNa, a word in the West-African Twi dialect for "grandmother," an

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28 accomplishment realized only after her characteristic zeal and  
29 persistence resulted in the passage of an act of Congress, and  
30 WHEREAS, typical of her colorful lifestyle, Ms. Betsch,  
31 whose favorite color was orange, like the rope once used in the  
32 ocean to segregate black and white swimming areas, wore an  
33 incredible 30 years' growth of seven-foot-long hair, much of  
34 which she carried in a suitcase and which, at her request, was  
35 removed at the time of her death on September 5, 2005, to be  
36 incorporated into a piece of artwork for display at the future  
37 A. L. Lewis American Beach Museum, her one major project not  
38 completed during her lifetime, NOW, THEREFORE,

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40 Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of  
41 Florida:

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43 That the Florida House of Representatives honors MaVynee  
44 Oshun Betsch, the state's renowned "Beach Lady," and her work as  
45 an outstanding example of the accomplishments that may be  
46 realized by a life fired by passion, commitment, and  
47 determination.