

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to the National Statuary Hall;
3 requesting the Joint Committee on the Library of
4 Congress to approve the replacement of the statue of
5 Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith in the National
6 Statuary Hall Collection with a statue of Mary McLeod
7 Bethune; providing an effective date.
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9 WHEREAS, in March 2016, the Florida Legislature passed, and
10 the Governor signed into law, Senate Bill 310, authorizing the
11 replacement of the statue of Confederate General Edmund Kirby
12 Smith in the National Statuary Hall Collection with a statue of
13 a prominent Florida citizen recommended by the ad hoc committee
14 of the Great Floridians Program within the Division of
15 Historical Resources of the Department of State, and

16 WHEREAS, one of the three prominent Florida citizens
17 recommended by the ad hoc committee is Mary McLeod Bethune, and

18 WHEREAS, Mary McLeod Bethune was born on July 10, 1875, in
19 Mayesville, South Carolina, and she was the first member of her
20 family, including all of her 16 siblings, born free following
21 the conclusion of the Civil War, and

22 WHEREAS, beginning at a young age, Mary McLeod Bethune
23 became engaged with learning and teaching after receiving an
24 opportunity to attend Trinity Presbyterian Mission School in her
25 hometown, and her dedication was evidenced through attending as

26 | many classes as she could and teaching her parents and siblings
27 | what she had learned, and

28 | WHEREAS, Mary McLeod Bethune was awarded a scholarship
29 | allowing her to enroll at the then-Scotia Seminary for Girls in
30 | Concord, North Carolina, from which she graduated in 1893, and
31 | she went on to continue her studies at the Moody Bible Institute
32 | in Chicago, and

33 | WHEREAS, upon graduating from the Moody Bible Institute,
34 | Mary McLeod Bethune became a teacher and taught at schools in
35 | Georgia and South Carolina before moving to Florida to teach at
36 | the Palatka Mission School, and

37 | WHEREAS, through observing the burgeoning black population
38 | in the area prompted by labor needed for railroad construction,
39 | Mary McLeod Bethune decided to follow through with her dream of
40 | opening her own school, and

41 | WHEREAS, Mary McLeod Bethune bought a small cottage in
42 | Daytona Beach to allow for the opening of the Daytona Literary
43 | and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in 1904 and
44 | through her commitment to fundraising, the school's enrollment
45 | grew from 5 to 250 students in just 2 years, and

46 | WHEREAS, the school continued to grow, which eventually
47 | resulted in its merger with the Cookman Institute for Men in
48 | Jacksonville to form Bethune-Cookman College, where she later
49 | served as president, and

50 WHEREAS, Mary McLeod Bethune's advocacy continued with her
51 founding of the National Council of Negro Women and her
52 appointment as Director of the Division of Negro Affairs of the
53 National Youth Administration by President Franklin Delano
54 Roosevelt, and

55 WHEREAS, through her position as the highest ranking
56 African-American woman in the Federal Government, Mary McLeod
57 Bethune was able to assist African-American youth in finding
58 employment and worked with the Women's Army Corps during World
59 War II to recruit African-American female officers, and

60 WHEREAS, upon her death in 1955, Mary McLeod Bethune's
61 inspirational leadership was praised by many, including former
62 First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who lauded "her wisdom and her
63 goodness," and

64 WHEREAS, in 1995, the United States National Park Service
65 established the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National
66 Historic Site in Washington, D.C., which has preserved the
67 townhouse that was once her personal residence and the first
68 headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women, and

69 WHEREAS, Mary McLeod Bethune's legacy continues to be felt
70 in Florida through the continued success of Bethune-Cookman
71 University, whose enrollment is currently approaching a record
72 high of 4,000 students, and

73 WHEREAS, it is appropriate to honor Mary McLeod Bethune as
74 one of two Floridians memorialized in statues in the National

75 Statuary Hall Collection given her significant and continuing
76 impact on this state, NOW, THEREFORE,

77

78 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

79

80 Section 1. The Legislature of the State of Florida hereby
81 respectfully requests the Joint Committee on the Library of
82 Congress to approve the replacement of the statue of Confederate
83 General Edmund Kirby Smith in the National Statuary Hall
84 Collection with a statue of Mary McLeod Bethune.

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Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.