

By Senator Thurston

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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 that the act is an official request
8 to the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress;
9 requiring the Department of State to deliver copies of
10 the act to certain persons on the act's effective
11 date; providing an effective date.
12

13 WHEREAS, in March 2016, the Florida Legislature passed, and
14 the Governor signed into law, Senate Bill 310, authorizing the
15 replacement of the statue of Confederate General Edmund Kirby
16 Smith in the National Statuary Hall Collection with a statue of
17 a prominent Florida citizen recommended by the ad hoc committee
18 of the Great Floridians Program within the Division of
19 Historical Resources of the Department of State, and

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

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

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

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30 many classes as she could and teaching her parents and siblings
31 what she had learned, and

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

37 WHEREAS, upon graduating from the Moody Bible Institute,
38 Mary McLeod Bethune became a teacher and taught at schools in
39 Georgia and South Carolina before moving to Florida to teach at
40 the Palatka Mission School, and

41 WHEREAS, through observing the burgeoning black population
42 in the area prompted by labor needed for railroad construction,
43 Mary McLeod Bethune decided to follow through with her dream of
44 opening her own school, and

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

50 WHEREAS, the school continued to grow, which eventually
51 resulted in its merger with the Cookman Institute for Men in
52 Jacksonville to form Bethune-Cookman College, where she later
53 served as president, and

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

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

64 WHEREAS, upon her death in 1955, Mary McLeod Bethune's
65 inspirational leadership was praised by many, including former
66 First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who lauded "her wisdom and her
67 goodness," and

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

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

77 WHEREAS, it is appropriate to honor Mary McLeod Bethune as
78 one of two Floridians memorialized in statues in the National
79 Statuary Hall Collection given her significant and continuing
80 impact on this state, NOW, THEREFORE,

81

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

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84 Section 1. The Legislature of the State of Florida hereby
85 respectfully requests the Joint Committee on the Library of
86 Congress to approve the replacement of the statue of Confederate
87 General Edmund Kirby Smith in the National Statuary Hall

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88 Collection with a statue of Mary McLeod Bethune.

89 Section 2. This act shall serve as an official request to
90 the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress pursuant to 2
91 U.S.C. s. 2132.

92 Section 3. On the effective date of this act, the
93 Department of State shall deliver a copy of this act to the
94 President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United
95 States House of Representatives, the Joint Committee on the
96 Library of Congress, and to each member of the Florida
97 delegation to the United States Congress.

98 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2018.