

CHAPTER 2018-19

Senate Bill No. 472

An act relating to the National Statuary Hall; requesting the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the replacement of the statue of Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith in the National Statuary Hall Collection with a statue of Mary McLeod Bethune; providing for the transfer of ownership of the statue of General Edmund Kirby Smith to the state; requiring the Division of Cultural Affairs of the Department of State to take possession of the statue and make available for public display; providing that the act is an official request to the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress; requiring the Department of State to deliver copies of the act to certain persons on the act's effective date; providing an effective date.

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

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

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

WHEREAS, beginning at a young age, Mary McLeod Bethune became engaged with learning and teaching after receiving an opportunity to attend Trinity Presbyterian Mission School in her hometown, and her dedication was evidenced through attending as many classes as she could and teaching her parents and siblings what she had learned, and

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

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

WHEREAS, through observing the burgeoning black population in the area prompted by labor needed for railroad construction, Mary McLeod

Bethune decided to follow through with her dream of opening her own school, and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 1. The Legislature of the State of Florida hereby respectfully requests the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the replacement of the statue of Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith in the National Statuary Hall Collection with a statue of Mary McLeod Bethune. Contingent upon such approval by the Joint Committee on the

Library of Congress, ownership of the statue of General Edmund Kirby Smith shall transfer to the state in accordance with 2 U.S.C. s. 2132(d). The Division of Cultural Affairs of the Department of State shall take possession of the returned statue, and make the statue available for public display.

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

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

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

Approved by the Governor March 19, 2018.

Filed in Office Secretary of State March 19, 2018.