

State of Tennessee

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 586

By Senator Crowe

and

Representative Tim Hicks

A RESOLUTION to commemorate the establishment of the Langston Interchange in honor of Mary Alexander, John Fletcher Birchette III, the Reverend C.H. Charlton, and Betty Goah of Johnson City.

WHEREAS, from time to time, the General Assembly enacts legislation to commemorate the lives of distinguished individuals by naming highways and bridges to honor their service to the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, four such exceptional Tennesseans were Mary Alexander, John Fletcher Birchette III, the Reverend C.H. Charlton, and Betty Goah, who, during their lifetimes, worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life for their fellow citizens of Johnson City in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Mary Alexander was the first African-American woman elected to serve on the Washington County Commission and was a founding member of the Langston Heritage Group, serving as a driving force behind Johnson City's efforts to restore a portion of the once-segregated Langston School; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Alexander was also a local historian who was instrumental in seeing that the Washington County Health Department building was named for Dr. Hezekiah B. Hankal, a minister and physician who was the first African-American man elected to Johnson City government in the late 1880s; and

WHEREAS, Mary Alexander was a member of the Washington County Election Commission, a member of the Johnson City Planning Commission, and an adjunct faculty member at East Tennessee State University; and

WHEREAS, John Fletcher Birchette III was a former president and funeral director of Birchette Mortuary and a leading supporter of the Carver Recreation Center; he was a 1962 graduate of Langston High School and attended Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, and East Tennessee State University; and

WHEREAS, during his years of industry, Mr. Birchette was an employee of the Veterans Administration, Mountain Home, and served as president of Birchette Mortuary for more than three decades; and

WHEREAS, an active part of his community, Mr. Birchette lent his time and talents to the board of directors of numerous community organizations, including the Johnson City Senior Citizens Center, the Langston Heritage Group, and the Washington County-Johnson City NAACP; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend C.H. Charlton was the longtime pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Johnson City and a former city commissioner; he came to Johnson City from Radford, Virginia, where he was the first African American elected to serve as mayor of a city in Southwest Virginia; and

WHEREAS, a faculty member at Northeast State Community College, Reverend Charlton began service in elective office as a member of the Johnson City Board of Education for a five-year term and later served six years as a member of the Johnson City Regional Planning Commission

and two years as vice mayor of Johnson City as part of a four-year term on the Johnson City Commission; and

WHEREAS, Betty Goah was a graduate of Langston High School, where as a student she helped to organize a student march to Science Hill High School to protest school segregation in Johnson City; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Goah attended Milligan University and received a certificate in Black Church Studies Administration and Ethics from the Vanderbilt School of Religion; Milligan University now honors her with the Goah Diversity Scholars program, which recognizes full-time undergraduate students who enhance the educational experience of all students by sharing their diverse cultural experiences; and

WHEREAS, during her years of industry, Betty Goah worked for the Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency and the Tennessee Hunger Coalition; she was a member of the board of directors for the Johnson City Development Authority, the Johnson City Downtown Clinic, and the Appalachian Community Fund; and

WHEREAS, by means of Senate Bill 144/House Bill 138 of the 113th General Assembly, the legislature has designated two bridges on Interstate 26, located near Johnson City's Langston Centre at 315 Elm Street, as the Langston Interchange in honor of Mary Alexander, John Fletcher Birchette III, the Reverend C.H. Charlton, and Betty Goah as a lasting tribute to honor the memory of these exceptional individuals; now, therefore,


BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memories of and pay tribute to the contributions of Mary Alexander, John Fletcher Birchette III, the Reverend C.H. Charlton, and Betty Goah to their community of Johnson City as we celebrate the establishment of the Langston Interchange.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.

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ADOPTED: April 19, 2023


RANDY McNALLY
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE


CAMERON SEXTON, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APPROVED this 2nd day of May 2023


BILL LEE, GOVERNOR