

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 1729

A RESOLUTION congratulating and commending Reverend Shirley D. Heermance and the members of St. Mark's African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church for receiving an African American Civil Rights Grant from the United States National Park Service.

WHEREAS, St. Mark's A.M.E. Church, in historic North Topeka, was established by a group of emancipated slaves known as "Exodusters," who migrated to Kansas from Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia and Texas, and worked at various jobs around Topeka; and

WHEREAS, St. Mark's is a part of the A.M.E. Church, the oldest African American incorporated religious denomination in America, which was born out of civil unrest and survived incredible perils, including attacks by the Ku Klux Klan, to establish Christian missions in the young state of Kansas; and

WHEREAS, St. Mark's endured extraordinary prejudices and racial hostilities while forming into a congregation that began a rich history of civil rights involvement from its founding in 1880; and

WHEREAS, Despite facing many adversities through the years, St. Mark's has continued to serve as a beacon in the North Topeka community that has illuminated the city, state, nation and world; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Oliver L. Brown, who was assigned as pastor of St. Mark's in 1953, was one of 12 plaintiffs listed in a public school desegregation suit originally filed in 1951. Brown's name was listed first, as he was filing on behalf of his daughter, Linda. The case reached the United States Supreme Court as *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional in 1954; and

WHEREAS, Linda Brown Thompson, the daughter of Reverend Brown, remains a member of St. Mark's and, until recent health problems, was the church's pianist; and

WHEREAS, Bishop Vinton R. Anderson, who served as pastor at St. Mark's, was the 92nd A.M.E. Church bishop and also one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches. Bishop Anderson died at the age of 86 in 2014; and

WHEREAS, Other notable members of St. Mark's include: Carolyn Wims-Campbell, the first African American elected to the Kansas State Board of Education; Joseph Johnson, the first African American District Court Judge in Shawnee County; Terry Crowder, former vice-chairman of the Kansas Human Rights Commission; and Foster Chisholm, current Sergeant of Arms for the Kansas House of Representatives, along with many other political and civic leaders, educators, doctors, lawyers and missionaries; and

WHEREAS, One hundred and sixty-four organizations and churches applied to the United States National Park Service's (NPS) African American Civil Rights Grant Program and St. Mark's application was among 39 projects in 20 states that were approved. In total, the NPS awarded \$7.5 million in grants with St. Mark's receiving \$231,804 for rehabilitation of the exterior and interior of its brick building, which was built in 1914, and will be 103 years old in May: Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the Senate of the State of Kansas: That we congratulate and commend Reverend Shirley D. Heermance and the members of St. Mark's African Methodist Episcopal Church for receiving an African American Civil Rights Grant from the United States National Park Service; and

Be it further resolved: That we thank Reverend Heermance and her congregation for doing God's work in North Topeka and in the Topeka community at large through the years, and we extend our best wishes for their continued prosperity, spiritual growth and success; and

Be it further resolved: That the Secretary of the Senate shall send 20 enrolled copies of this resolution to Senator Hensley.

Senate Resolution No. 1729 was sponsored by Senators Hensley, Kelly and V. Schmidt.

I hereby certify that the above RESOLUTION originated in the SENATE, and was adopted by that body

President of the Senate.

Secretary of the Senate.