

1       HR169  
2       168043-3  
3       By Representative Knight  
4       RFD:  
5       First Read: 28-APR-15

8 MOURNING THE DEATH OF RENOWNED HEART SURGEON AND  
9 CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST DR. LEVI WATKINS, JR.  
10

11 WHEREAS, we deeply regret and are greatly saddened  
12 to learn of the death of renowned heart surgeon and civil  
13 rights activist Dr. Levi Watkins, Jr.; his invaluable life of  
14 70 years is commended and celebrated with tremendous  
15 thanksgiving; and

16 WHEREAS, the passing of Dr. Watkins leaves a void in  
17 the lives of his loving family and many friends and the  
18 numerous patients and individuals worldwide who have greatly  
19 benefitted from his meritorious life's work; and

20 WHEREAS, Dr. Watkins was born June 13, 1944, in  
21 Parsons, Kansas; at a young age, he was baptized by the  
22 Reverend Ralph Abernathy in Birmingham, Alabama; he moved with  
23 his family to Montgomery, Alabama, and joined Dexter Avenue  
24 Baptist Church under the pastorship of Dr. Martin Luther King,  
25 Jr.; and

26 WHEREAS, Dr. Watkins earned a Bachelor's Degree from  
27 Tennessee State University and became the first black student

1 to enter and graduate from the Vanderbilt University School of  
2 Medicine; he completed a surgical internship at Johns Hopkins  
3 University Hospital, emerging as its first black chief  
4 resident in cardiac surgery and conducted ground breaking  
5 research at Harvard Medical School, which opened the doors for  
6 the use of angiotensin blockers to treat congestive heart  
7 failure; in addition, he became a full-time faculty member and  
8 a member of the medical school's admissions committee; and

9 WHEREAS, notably, Dr. Watkins has the utmost  
10 distinctions of being the first surgeon to successfully  
11 implant an automatic heart defibrillator in a human patient  
12 and of being nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize for his  
13 significant medical contributions; and

14 WHEREAS, he is noted as an advocate for civil rights  
15 who paved the way for many black students to attend medical  
16 school; in an interview, he stated that all his work since the  
17 integration of Vanderbilt University had been about inclusion,  
18 equity, and opportunity; and

19 WHEREAS, Dr. Watkins was a valued member of society;  
20 even though his presence is greatly missed, his memory is  
21 cherished in the hearts and minds of all those who were  
22 fortunate enough to know him; now therefore,

23 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF  
24 THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, That while grieving the death of  
25 Dr. Levi Watkins, Jr., we are extremely grateful for his  
26 abundant life, and we offer this resolution in highest tribute

1       to his inspiring legacy, as well as in heartfelt sympathy to  
2       his family and friends.