

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**SESSION 1999**

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**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1251**

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Sponsors: Representatives Womble, Oldham, Decker, Esposito, Gray, and Sexton.

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Referred to: Rules, Calendar and Operations of the House.

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April 15, 1999

1 A JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF KENNETH R.  
2 WILLIAMS, ONE OF WINSTON-SALEM'S MOST PROMINENT CITIZENS.  
3 Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams was born on August 16, 1912, in Norfolk, Virginia, to  
4 Kenneth R. Williams and Vandelia Perry Williams; and  
5 Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams grew up in Winston-Salem, attended the public  
6 schools, and graduated from Columbian Heights High School in 1928; and  
7 Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams earned a bachelors degree in history from  
8 Morehouse College and both a masters and doctorate degree from Boston University; and  
9 Whereas, in 1936, Kenneth R. Williams joined the faculty of Winston-Salem  
10 Teachers College, now Winston-Salem State University, where he taught history until  
11 1937; and  
12 Whereas, from 1937 to 1939, Kenneth R. Williams taught at the Palmer  
13 Memorial Institute in Sedalia, North Carolina; and  
14 Whereas, in 1938, Kenneth R. Williams married Edythe Williams and to this  
15 union three sons, Kenneth, Ronald, and Norman, were born; and  
16 Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams served his country during World War II as a  
17 Chaplain in the United States Army. He began his tour of duty with the rank of first  
18 lieutenant and ended it with the rank of major; and  
19 Whereas, after his service in the army, Kenneth R. Williams returned to  
20 Winston-Salem State University where he was a history professor, a chaplain, the James  
21 A. Gray Professor of Religion, and the Dean of Men from 1946 to 1960; and

1           Whereas, as a result of the social and racial tensions in Winston-Salem and the  
2 subsequent unionization of the predominantly African-American workforces at R.J.  
3 Reynolds Tobacco Company, Local Union # 22 was formed. In the aftermath, of the  
4 1944 Smith v. Allwright court decision outlawing the all-white voting primary, Local  
5 Union # 22's voter registration campaign increased the number of African-American  
6 voters in Winston-Salem from 300 to 3,000 in a two-year period; and

7           Whereas, in 1947, Kenneth R. Williams was elected as Winston-Salem's first  
8 African-American alderman; and

9           Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams served as an alderman from 1947 to 1951; and

10           Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams was appointed as executive vice-president of  
11 Winston-Salem State University in February 1961, as interim president in July 1961, and  
12 as president in 1962; and

13           Whereas, in 1963, Kenneth R. Williams was sponsored by the United States  
14 Department of State and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education to  
15 travel to Poland to study Polish institutions of higher education; and

16           Whereas, in 1972, Winston-Salem State University became part of The  
17 University of North Carolina System and Kenneth R. Williams was named Chancellor, a  
18 position he held until his retirement in 1977; and

19           Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams was honored by Winston-Salem State  
20 University in 1975 when the 1,800-seat auditorium was named in his honor on campus;  
21 and

22           Whereas, in 1978, Kenneth R. Williams was named Chancellor Emeritus by  
23 the Winston-Salem State University Board of Trustees; and

24           Whereas, during Kenneth R. Williams' successful tenure at Winston-Salem  
25 State University, he began the business administration program, brought the nursing and  
26 teacher education programs to prominence, and created the Division of Student Affairs.  
27 He also established the R. J. Reynolds Scholars Program in 1970, which increased the  
28 pool of talented African-American students at the university; and

29           Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams was a deeply religious man, serving as pastor  
30 of First Institution Baptist Church in Winston-Salem from 1937 to 1948 and as pastor of  
31 the West End Baptist Church in Winston-Salem from 1949 to 1960; and

32           Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams was a devoted public servant, serving on  
33 numerous boards, commissions, and civic organizations, including the North Carolina  
34 Parole Board, Forsyth County Mental Health Association, Winston-Salem School Board,  
35 Library Board, Winston-Salem Hospital Commission, North Carolina Battleship  
36 Commission Board, Winston-Salem Urban League, National Council of Accreditation for  
37 Teacher Education, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Board,  
38 Winston-Salem Red Cross Board, Middle District Court of North Carolina Naturalization  
39 Committee, Board of Fellows of Gallaudet College, Northwestern Bank Board of  
40 Directors, and Board of Directors of Hospice of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County,  
41 Inc.; and

1           Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams received numerous awards and honors,  
2 including the Freedom Foundation Award and honorary doctorate degrees from  
3 Morehouse College, Wake Forest University, and Southern Illinois University; and

4           Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams was included in Who's Who in America, Who's  
5 Who in American Colleges and Universities, and Personalities of the South; and

6           Whereas, Kenneth R. Williams died on December 31, 1989, and is survived by  
7 his wife, Edythe Williams, and two sons, Norman Williams and Ronald Williams; and

8           Whereas, with the death of Kenneth R. Williams, his family, Forsyth County,  
9 and the State of North Carolina lost a good friend and colleague and an admired and truly  
10 distinguished citizen; Now, therefore,

11 Be it resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring:

12           Section 1. The General Assembly expresses its deep appreciation for the life  
13 and accomplishments of Kenneth R. Williams and for the devoted and tireless service he  
14 rendered to Winston-Salem State University, the State of North Carolina, and his  
15 community.

16           Section 2. The General Assembly extends its deepest sympathy to the family  
17 and friends of Kenneth R. Williams for the loss of their loved one.

18           Section 3. The Secretary of State shall transmit a certified copy of this  
19 resolution to the family of Kenneth R. Williams.

20           Section 4. This resolution is effective upon ratification.