**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE CHAMPION TENNIS HALL OF FAMER AND GOLF TRAILBLAZER ALTHEA GIBSON, A NATIVE OF CLARENDON COUNTY, FOR HER OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE WORLD OF PROFESSIONAL SPORTS, EDUCATION, AND ENTERTAINMENT.

Whereas, born in Silver, South Carolina, Althea Neale Gibson came into this world on August 25, 1927, the eldest of five. In 1930, the family moved to Harlem, New York, where Althea’s three sisters and brother were born; and

Whereas, the young Althea grew up in Harlem, where she trained with legendary tennis coach Fred Johnson. In 1941, she won her first tournament, sponsored by the American Tennis Association (ATA), the oldest sports organization founded by African Americans. In 1947, she captured the ATA’s women’s singles championship, which she would hold for ten consecutive years; and

Whereas, she won a full scholarship to Tallahassee’s Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, where she played on the men’s tennis team and the women’s golf team, became an Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. member, and ultimately earned her bachelor’s degree in 1953. In 1950, Althea became the first Black tennis player, male or female, to enter the US National (US Open predecessor) Grass Court Championship at the West Side Tennis Club in Forest Hills, Queens, New York; and

Whereas, until 1956, Althea had achieved only fair success in match tennis play, but that year she captured the first Major won by a Black player, 1956 French Open women singles and doubles titles and women’s doubles title at Wimbledon. In 1957, she won the Australian Open women’s doubles and Wimbledon women’s singles and doubles titles, as well as the US National women’s singles and mixed doubles championship at Forest Hills. Following Althea’s 1957 Wimbledon singles victory, Queen Elizabeth II presented the winner’s trophy to Althea as champion, a presentation the Queen had never made previously. Also following this historic victory, Althea Gibson became only the second Black sports hero to receive a ticker‑tape parade down the “Canyon of Heroes” through the financial district of New York City; and

Whereas, at this momentous time, she penned her revealing autobiography, *I Always Wanted to Be Somebody*. Next, she taught herself how to play golf, turned pro, and in 1964 broke another long‑standing color barrier, becoming the first African American member of the Ladies Professional Golf Association. As an eleven‑time Grand Slam tennis champion, in 1971 she broke the ultimate color barrier as the first Black player to be elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame; and

Whereas, in 2004, the Family Circle Cup named its show court the Althea Gibson Club Court in her honor. In 2013, at the US Tennis Association (USTA)/Billie Jean King Tennis Center in Flushing, New York, the US Postal Service issued the Althea Gibson “Forever” first‑class commemorative stamp as the thirty‑sixth inductee into the Black Heritage stamp series. Further, after many years of advocacy, in 2019 the USTA erected the Althea Gibson statue adjacent to Arthur Ashe Stadium at Flushing’s USTA Tennis Center. An upcoming tribute: On her August 25 birthday in 2022, Althea’s home block in Harlem will be co‑named in her honor; and

Whereas, the House of Representatives takes great pleasure in commending Althea Gibson for her distinguished career in professional tennis and in saluting her as an inspiration to the athletes who have followed in her footsteps and benefited from her trailblazing accomplishments. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the South Carolina House of Representatives, by this resolution, recognize and celebrate champion Tennis Hall of Famer and golf trailblazer Althea Gibson, a native of Clarendon County, for her outstanding achievements in the world of professional sports, education, and entertainment.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Althea Gibson.

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