**South Carolina General Assembly**

125th Session, 2023-2024

**H. 5473**

**STATUS INFORMATION**

House Resolution

Sponsors: Reps. Ott, Alexander, Anderson, Atkinson, Bailey, Ballentine, Bamberg, Bannister, Bauer, Beach, Bernstein, Blackwell, Bradley, Brewer, Brittain, Burns, Bustos, Calhoon, Carter, Caskey, Chapman, Chumley, Clyburn, Cobb-Hunter, Collins, Connell, B.J. Cox, B.L. Cox, Crawford, Cromer, Davis, Dillard, Elliott, Erickson, Felder, Forrest, Gagnon, Garvin, Gatch, Gibson, Gilliam, Gilliard, Guest, Guffey, Haddon, Hager, Hardee, Harris, Hart, Hartnett, Hayes, Henderson-Myers, Henegan, Herbkersman, Hewitt, Hiott, Hixon, Hosey, Howard, Hyde, Jefferson, J.E. Johnson, J.L. Johnson, S. Jones, W. Jones, Jordan, Kilmartin, King, Kirby, Landing, Lawson, Leber, Ligon, Long, Lowe, Magnuson, May, McCabe, McCravy, McDaniel, McGinnis, Mitchell, J. Moore, T. Moore, A.M. Morgan, T.A. Morgan, Moss, Murphy, Neese, B. Newton, W. Newton, Nutt, O'Neal, Oremus, Pace, Pedalino, Pendarvis, Pope, Rivers, Robbins, Rose, Rutherford, Sandifer, Schuessler, Sessions, G.M. Smith, M.M. Smith, Spann-Wilder, Stavrinakis, Taylor, Thayer, Thigpen, Trantham, Vaughan, Weeks, West, Wetmore, Wheeler, White, Whitmire, Williams, Willis, Wooten and Yow

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Introduced in the House on April 25, 2024

Adopted by the House on April 25, 2024

Summary: Bernie Lee Wright

**HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS**

Date Body Action Description with journal page number

4/25/2024 House Introduced and adopted ([House Journal‑page 25](h:\hj\20240425.docx))

View the latest  [legislative information](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/billsearch.php?billnumbers=5473&session=125&summary=B)  at the website

**VERSIONS OF THIS BILL**

[04/25/2024](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess125_2023-2024/prever/5473_20240425.docx)

A house RESOLUTION

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR BERNIE LEE WRIGHT for his significant career with the United States Department of Agriculture, Farmers Home Administration, and with the Penn Center.

Whereas, an experienced political leader throughout South Carolina and the Southeast, Mr. Bernie Lee Wright was born August 5, 1947, in St. Matthews and educated in Calhoun County’s segregated public schools. He graduated from John Ford High School in 1965 and earned a bachelor’s degree in agricultural economics and business from South Carolina State College. In 1976, Mr. Wright entered American University in Washington, D.C., to earn a master’s degree in applied public financial management; and

Whereas, he began his professional career with a loan agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Farmers Home Administration (FHA), in March of 1970 as an assistant county supervisor in St. Matthews; and

Whereas, in the patriotic tradition of the sons of South Carolina, Mr. Wright served in the United States Army, and in June of 1970, he went on military furlough from the USDA to begin military training at Fort Jackson and Fort Gordon, Georgia. He was permanently based at Fort Ord, California, as a military police officer and completed a military career that lasted twenty-six years. He retired in 1996; and

Whereas, in 1993, Mr. Wright became the first African American appointed as the South Carolina state director of the USDA FHA. In this position, he was responsible annually for one hundred eighty million in programmatic funds for loans and grants and another nine million dollars for operational expenses and for the supervision of two hundred seventy-four individuals. In 2000, he retired from USDA Rural Development, formerly USDA FHA, after thirty-one years of employment with this agency; and

Whereas, during his tenure as state director of USDA FHA, he served as a member of the advisory board of the Penn Center. In 2002, he became its executive director and served in that position until 2007, where he was able to focus on his love and respect for African American history. Under Mr. Wright’s leadership, the Penn Center acquired hotel and motel properties, and a massive renovation of the building and grounds of the Penn Center was undertaken; and

Whereas, in 2021, Mr. Wright returned to the Penn Center family as the interim director. His mission was to preserve the Sea Islands and Gullah Geechee history and culture, as well as the buildings located on the campus of the Penn Center. During both tenures, he was able to receive county, state, and federal appropriations for the renovation, revitalization, and preservation of the Penn Center. Mr. Wright is dedicated to increasing the visibility, significance, and awareness of the Penn Center’s legacy for South Carolinians and others across the nation; and

Whereas, together with his beloved wife, the late Beverly S. Vaughan Wright, he reared a fine daughter, Dr. Brandi LaVaughan Wright; and

Whereas, dedicated to his community, Mr. Wright has been a lifelong member of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in St. Matthews and currently serves as the chairman of the Trustee Ministry. He serves as the chairman of the Calhoun County Resource Information Corporation (CCRI), Inc., and on the board of the Cecil Williams South Carolina Civil Rights Museum. He is a member of the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission, a member of the Orangeburg County Young Farmers Organization, and a life member of the South Carolina State University Alumni Association; and

Whereas, Mr. Wright will be inducted into the 2024 1862 Circle of the Penn Center on Saturday, April 27, 2024, at a gala event on Hilton Head Island; and

Whereas, the South Carolina House of Representatives values the impact that Bernie Lee Wright’s career with the USDA and with the Penn Center, spanning decades, has had on the Palmetto State and beyond. 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 honor Bernie Lee Wright for his significant career with the United States Department of Agriculture, Farmers Home Administration, and with the Penn Center.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Bernie Lee Wright.

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