

By: Representative Hines

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 117

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE LIFE, LEGACY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS
2 OF DR. WALTER TURNBULL, FOUNDER OF THE BOYS CHOIR OF HARLEM, AND
3 EXPRESSING DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS UPON HIS
4 PASSING.

5 WHEREAS, Dr. Walter Turnbull, born July 19, 1944, in
6 Greenville, Mississippi, departed this earthly life on Friday,
7 March 23, 2007, at the age of 62 after a lengthy battle with
8 cancer, to enter into eternal rest with his Heavenly Father,
9 causing great sorrow and loss to his family and friends; and

10 WHEREAS, Dr. Turnbull won a music scholarship to Tougaloo
11 College, where he studied classical music and vocal performance,
12 and after graduation moved to New York in 1968 with dreams of
13 being an operatic tenor; and

14 WHEREAS, in addition to continuing his education at the
15 Manhattan School of Music, Dr. Turnbull began performing with the
16 New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestras; and

17 WHEREAS, while working toward a doctorate at the Manhattan
18 School of Music, he began a choir as an after-school music program
19 in the basement of Harlem's Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church
20 in 1968, whose popularity grew rapidly before eventually being
21 established as the internationally renowned performance group; and

22 WHEREAS, incorporated as the Boys Choir of Harlem in 1975,
23 the group, which usually included about 150 boys, eventually
24 spawned a 600-student school, the Choir Academy of Harlem, which
25 offered a full academic program in Grades 4 through 12; and

26 WHEREAS, from modest beginnings in the basement of the
27 church located on 123rd Street, the choir went on to sing for
28 presidents, world diplomats and popes, reflecting Dr. Turnbull's

29 belief that musical training focuses the mind and helps any child
30 succeed in life; and

31 WHEREAS, it has been celebrated around the world for its
32 eclectic musical standards, varying from performances of Handel to
33 spirituals, jazz and pop; and

34 WHEREAS, based on the success of the Boys Choir, Dr. Turnbull
35 founded the Girls Choir of Harlem in 1988; and

36 WHEREAS, for his remarkable work with inner city youth, who
37 could have easily fallen prey to the many societal menaces and
38 deviant temptations, Dr. Turnbull received the National Medal of
39 Arts from President Clinton in 1997 and many other honors,
40 including being named to the New York Black 100 by the Schomburg
41 Center for Research in Black Culture; and

42 WHEREAS, though he has traversed the rivers of life to now
43 stand on golden heavenly shores, the legacy of his teaching and
44 profound impact on the lives of more than 7,000 young men will
45 thrive in the hearts of those who were privileged to experience
46 growth under his tutelage and inspiration, including his surviving
47 siblings: Horace Turnbull, Sammy J. Turnbull and Mary Webster;
48 nephew, Representative John W. Hines, Sr.; and legislative members
49 of the Tougaloo Alumni, Representatives Willie L. Bailey, Edward
50 Blackmon, Jr., Mary H. Coleman, Willie J. Perkins, Sr., and Rufus
51 E. Straughter; and

52 WHEREAS, it is the policy of the House of Representatives to
53 recognize the accomplishments and commend the life and success of
54 one of our great state's native sons, such as a master musician as
55 Dr. Turnbull, whose remarkable career has brought great pride to
56 the affiliates of the Harlem Boys Choir and to the State of
57 Mississippi:

58 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
59 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby
60 commend the life, legacy and accomplishments of Dr. Walter
61 Turnbull, founder of the Boys Choir of Harlem, extend our

62 condolences and express deepest sympathy to his family and friends
63 upon his passing.

64 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
65 furnished to the family members of Dr. Turnbull and to the members
66 of the Capitol Press Corps.