

By: Representatives Scott, Tollett

## HOUSE RESOLUTION

TO REMEMBER AND HONOR THE LEGACY OF MATTIE WHYTE  
WOODRIDGE FOR HER ROLE IN CREATING TEACHER  
APPRECIATION WEEK.

### Subtitle

TO REMEMBER AND HONOR THE LEGACY OF  
MATTIE WHYTE WOODRIDGE FOR HER ROLE IN  
CREATING TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK.

WHEREAS, while celebrating Black History Month, students, parents, and the community at large should recognize the crucial work of teachers throughout the year, and it is important to set aside a week for the sole purpose of celebrating Teacher appreciation Week;

WHEREAS, Teacher Appreciation Week has become an established tradition in school districts throughout the United States, but few people seem to know how it started;

WHEREAS, the idea for Teacher Appreciation Week came from a teacher in Arkansas who was an African-American woman who taught at a school in the segregated South;

WHEREAS, during the early 1940s, Mattie Whyte Woodridge, an Arkansas teacher, decided that educators should be recognized for the contributions they make to society, and made this one of her missions;

WHEREAS, Ms. Woodridge wrote to every governor in the United States and



corresponded with a host of politicians and leaders in education, stressing the need for a national day to honor teachers;

WHEREAS, in 1944, one (1) of the many letters she wrote was read by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt;

WHEREAS, Mrs. Roosevelt acted upon that letter, asking the Eighty-First United States Congress to consider setting aside one (1) day per year to acknowledge and honor the work of teachers;

WHEREAS, in addition to the efforts of Ms. Woodridge, the National Education Association, joined by its state affiliates in Kansas and Indiana, worked tirelessly to help make Ms. Woodridge's suggestion a reality and lobbied the United States Congress to create a day for the nation to celebrate teachers;

WHEREAS, Ms. Woodridge gradually saw her plan to honor the work of teachers materialize as she continued to work as an educator in the Arkansas Delta, eventually serving as principal of Northend Elementary School in Helena, Arkansas, in the 1950s;

WHEREAS, although Ms. Woodridge's idea worked its way through the United States Congress for decades, she lived to see it come to fruition;

WHEREAS, the United States Congress initially declared March 7, 1980, as "National Teacher Day", but only for that particular year;

WHEREAS, a growing movement to make National Teacher Day an annual event had already taken root, and people throughout the country continued to celebrate it;

WHEREAS, for several more years, the National Education Association and its affiliates observed National Teacher Day on the first Tuesday of March, and in 1985, the National Education Association Representative Assembly voted to officially designate March 1 as National Teacher Day;

WHEREAS, the National Parent Teacher Association was also eager to make the day of recognition official, and took steps to designate the first full week of May as Teacher appreciation Week;

WHEREAS, each year, the first full week of May would be designated as Teacher Appreciation Week;

WHEREAS, when Teacher Appreciation Week was established in May 1999, Representative Rush Holt, a congressman from New Jersey, delivered a touching speech as he discussed National Teacher Day before the One Hundred Sixth United States Congress, providing in part, "As a teacher myself, I know that teaching is a hard and sometimes unrecognized job. But of all the important jobs in our society, nothing makes more of an impact on our children than a well trained, caring, and dedicated teacher. No job ultimately is more important to our society";

WHEREAS, on August 14, 1999, just three (3) months after Representative Rush Holt gave his speech, Mattie Whyte Woodridge died at ninety (90) years of age;

WHEREAS, although details of Mattie Whyte Woodridge's important lifelong mission are sparse, her patience and diligence led to the permanent establishment of an annual event that continues to make educators and students smile year after year;

WHEREAS, Mattie Whyte Woodridge does not have her own Wikipedia page, nor is she profiled in many history-based publications. In fact, her name is rarely mentioned, even among all of the festivities that Teacher Appreciation Week brings each year;

WHEREAS, as we honor our teachers, we should also remember and honor the legacy of Mattie Whyte Woodridge,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

THAT the House of Representatives remember and honor Mattie Whyte Woodridge for her role in creating Teacher Appreciation Week.