

A RESOLUTION honoring Belinda Mason during Women's History Month.

WHEREAS, Belinda Mason was a reporter with *The Appalachian News-Express* in Pikeville and *The Hartford Times News*. A gifted short story writer, she dreamed of writing the great American novel; and

WHEREAS, in January 1987, while receiving a blood transfusion during the birth of her second child, Belinda Mason was infected with the AIDS virus; and

WHEREAS, Belinda Mason would become one of the most recognizable advocates in the country for people living with AIDS. She was appointed by President George Herbert Walker Bush to the National Commission on AIDS, a role that she would use to passionately defend the dignity and rights of all those living and dying with the disease; and

WHEREAS, saying of herself that she was "perfect...Southern...white...articulate. I got AIDS in a nice way," Belinda Mason attempted to transform prejudices toward people living with the disease and reinvent long-held stereotypes about how to talk about AIDS; and

WHEREAS, Belinda Mason died at the age of 33 on September 9, 1991, and for her uncommon courage in the face of death, for all that she accomplished as an AIDS advocate during a time in this country when it was unpopular to do so, and for being a daughter of this great Commonwealth, this honorable body posthumously honors her for her many contributions to human rights on Women's History Month; and

WHEREAS, in so doing this body also recognizes the formation of Women's History Month and acknowledges that women of every race, class, and ethnic background have made historic contributions in every area to the growth and strength of our nation in countless recorded and unrecorded ways; and

WHEREAS, as recently as 1970, women's history was virtually an unknown topic in our nation's schools or in the general public consciousness. To raise awareness, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County, California, Commission on the Status of

Women initiated a Women's History Week celebration in 1978. After its activities in March of that year were met with enthusiastic response, the education process continued. A member of the group was invited to Sarah Lawrence College in 1979 to participate in Women's History Institutes, attended by the national leaders of organizations for women and girls. Attendees began similar celebrations within their own organizations and school districts and secured a Congressional Resolution declaring a National Women's History Week. In 1981, Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah and Representative Barbara Mikulski of Maryland co-sponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution recognizing National Women's History Week; and

WHEREAS, as word spread across the nation, state departments of education encouraged celebrations of National Women's History Week as an effective means to achieve equity goals within classrooms. Essay contests, special programs, and other community observances focused on the significance of women in history. Within just a few years, thousands of schools and communities were celebrating National Women's History Week, supported and encouraged by resolutions from governors, city councils, school boards, and the United States Congress; and

WHEREAS, in 1987, the National Women's History Project petitioned Congress to expand the national celebration to the entire month of March. Since that time, the National Women's History Month Resolution has been approved with bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress, and the President has issued for our nation a special Women's History Month Proclamation each year; and

WHEREAS, American women have played and continue to play a critical economic, cultural, and social role in every sphere of the life of the nation by constituting a significant portion of the labor force, working inside and outside of the home; and

WHEREAS, American women have also played a unique role throughout the history of the nation by providing the majority of the volunteer labor force and improving the productivity of the workplace. American women were the driving force behind the

establishment of early charitable philanthropic and cultural institutions, and yet it was their work ethic that helped tilt the momentum of World War II in favor of our nation; and

WHEREAS, American women of every race, class, and ethnic background have served as early leaders in the forefront of every major progressive social change movement. Women have been leaders, not only in securing their own rights of suffrage and equal opportunity, but also in the abolitionist movement, the emancipation movement, the industrial labor movement, the civil rights movement, and other movements, especially the peace movement, which have served to create a more fair and just society for all; and

WHEREAS, despite the countless contributions women have made in the United States and efforts to recognize their importance in history, the role of American women has been overlooked. This honorable body lauds the efforts to raise awareness of women in history, not only during this month, but throughout the year; and

WHEREAS, this body hereby honors those women who serve this Commonwealth, from the female members of this General Assembly to the teachers and doctors and lawyers and thinkers who strive to bring attention to the need for equality in pay and in status between men and women; and

WHEREAS, this body also duly honors Belinda Mason, who has left such an indelible imprint not only on women's history but on American history as well, and urges all Kentuckians to observe Women's History Month and to consider their own place in the ongoing struggle for equality;

NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

➔Section 1. The members of the House of Representatives hereby honor Belinda Mason.

➔Section 2. The members of the House of Representatives acknowledge Women's History Month and pause to reflect on the many accomplishments Belinda Mason made as a notable woman in Kentucky's history.

➔Section 3. When the House of Representatives adjourns this day, it does so in honor and eternal gratitude of Belinda Mason.

➔Section 4. The Clerk of the House of Representatives is directed to transmit a copy of this Resolution to Representative Mary Lou Marzian for delivery.