

Senator Gregory offered the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 134.

A resolution honoring the memory of William Webb Ferguson.

Whereas, William Webb Ferguson was the first African American to be elected to the Michigan Legislature.

Whereas, Mr. Ferguson was from Detroit and the first African American to enroll in the Detroit public school system where he graduated with honors in 1876.

Whereas, The Ferguson family founded the first Detroit newspaper for and by the black community and he continued his family tradition by learning the printing trade and opening Ferguson Printing Company; and

Whereas, Mr. Ferguson held several prominent positions in Detroit, and served as a leader in the African American community, and was key ally to Mayor Hazen Pingree; and

Whereas, William Webb Ferguson was an outspoken advocate of the rights of African Americans. After being denied service at a restaurant for refusing to sit in the “colored section” he filed a discrimination lawsuit that was eventually heard before the Michigan Supreme Court. The court sided with Ferguson and ruled racial segregation in public places violated Michigan law; and

Whereas, In 1892 he was elected as a Republican into the Michigan House of Representatives where he served from 1893 until 1896. As a state representative, Mr. Ferguson was best known for supporting retirement benefits for disabled firemen and pensions for the families of deceased firemen; and

Whereas, After leaving the legislature, Mr. Ferguson obtained his law degree from the Detroit College of Law and remained active in Detroit and Wayne County political circles; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That the members of this legislature body honors the memory of William Webb Ferguson by displaying his portrait outside the former Supreme Court where he won his landmark civil rights case; and be it further

Resolved, That William Webb Ferguson’s legacy inspire others and remind us of the important achievements he contributed to Michigan and to the African American community.