

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 584

Honoring the life and legacy of Reverend Richard Smallwood, a world-class composer, pianist, and arranger.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 15, 2026

Mr. WARNOCK (for himself and Mr. SCOTT of South Carolina) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Honoring the life and legacy of Reverend Richard Smallwood,
a world-class composer, pianist, and arranger.

Whereas Reverend Richard Smallwood was born on November 30, 1948, in Atlanta, Georgia;

Whereas Reverend Smallwood was musically gifted from a young age, began playing the piano by ear at age 5, formally trained at age 7, and formed his first choir at age 11;

Whereas Reverend Smallwood graduated from Howard University cum laude with degrees in classical vocal performance and piano and co-founded the Celestials, the university's first gospel choir;

Whereas, after college, Reverend Smallwood taught music at the University of Maryland, at the Washington School of

Music, and for the District of Columbia Public School System;

Whereas Reverend Smallwood released his first album in 1974, entitled, “Look Up and Live,” and his second album in 1976, entitled, “Give Us Peace”;

Whereas, in 1977, the Richard Smallwood Singers were formed and brought a contemporary sound to gospel music;

Whereas, in 1982, the Richard Smallwood Singers’ self-titled album was on Billboard magazine’s chart for top gospel albums for 87 weeks;

Whereas, in 1984, the album “Psalms” by the Richard Smallwood Singers topped the gospel albums chart and earned the group their first Grammy nomination for Best Soul Gospel Performance by a Duo or Group;

Whereas, in 1996, the album “Adoration: Live in Atlanta” was released and featured “Total Praise,” which became one of Reverend Smallwood’s signature compositions and defined his career;

Whereas Reverend Smallwood is also known for his song “I Love the Lord,” which was sung by Whitney Houston and debuted in the 1996 movie “The Preacher’s Wife”;

Whereas Reverend Smallwood is also known for the songs “Center of My Joy,” “My Everything,” and “I Will Sing Praises”;

Whereas many of Reverend Smallwood’s songs were recorded and performed by other artists, notably Stevie Wonder, Whitney Houston, Destiny’s Child, Yolanda Adams, Karen Clark Sheard, Edwin Hawkins, Chaka Kahn, Kelly Price, Ledisi, Gerald Levert, Reuben Studdard, and Aretha Franklin;

Whereas Reverend Smallwood was nominated for 8 Grammy Awards and received 3 Dove Awards from the Gospel Music Association;

Whereas, on separate occasions, Reverend Smallwood performed for former President Richard Nixon, former President Ronald Reagan, and former President William Clinton;

Whereas Reverend Smallwood was ordained as a minister at the District of Columbia's historic Metropolitan Baptist Church in 2004, the same year he completed his Master of Divinity degree at Howard University;

Whereas Reverend Smallwood served as an artist-in-residence at Metropolitan Baptist Church, following his ordination and throughout his ministry;

Whereas, in 2006, Reverend Smallwood was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame;

Whereas, in November 2019, Reverend Smallwood released a book entitled, "Total Praise: The Autobiography of Richard Smallwood";

Whereas, in 2024, the National Symphony Orchestra held a 2-day celebration of his 75th birthday at the Kennedy Center;

Whereas Reverend Smallwood's musical virtuoso continues to inspire listeners and is rooted deeply in faith-based worship that blends classical gospel music with themes of hope, healing, and resilience, teaching believers to find strength in God during times of suffering;

Whereas Reverend Smallwood's iconic song entitled, "Total Praise" has become a universal hymn of surrender and divine support, reflecting the rich layers of the Black

spiritual experience and steadfast belief that will continue to inspire listeners for generations to come; and

Whereas Reverend Smallwood left a lasting legacy in the music industry, rooted in faith and triumph: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) mourns the passing of the legendary gospel
3 extraordinaire Reverend Richard Smallwood;

4 (2) honors the life and legacy of Reverend Rich-
5 ard Smallwood and his contributions to the United
6 States of America; and

7 (3) respectfully requests that the Secretary of
8 the Senate transmit an enrolled copy of this resolu-
9 tion to—

10 (A) the family of Reverend Richard
11 Smallwood;

12 (B) Howard University; and

13 (C) the Metropolitan Baptist Church of the
14 District of Columbia.

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